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*AUTHORIZED OR REVISED?*

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## SERMONS

ON SOME OF THE TEXTS IN WHICH THE  
REVISED VERSION DIFFERS FROM  
THE AUTHORIZED.



*AUTHORIZED OR REVISED?*

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# SERMONS

ON SOME OF THE TEXTS IN WHICH THE  
REVISED VERSION DIFFERS FROM  
THE AUTHORIZED.

BY

C. J. VAUGHAN, D.D.

DEAN OF LLANDAFF, AND MASTER OF THE TEMPLE.

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## P R E F A C E.

THE following Sermons were preached with one exception in the Temple Church, and for the most part within the last three months. They were designed as a practical comment upon some of the features of the recent Revision of the Authorized Version of the New Testament. Changes of reading, changes of rendering, changes of punctuation involving interpretation, are illustrated by turns in these Sermons. Into the direct question of the substitution of the Revised for the Authorized Version in the Lectionary of our Churches I have not entered. I regard that question as one for which the public mind is not yet ripe. I deprecate nothing so much as haste in its decision. Meanwhile I earnestly hope that

no partial or eclectic treatment of it will be attempted. For the present the Revised Version is on its trial as a whole. Not until it is pronounced by public opinion to be better on the whole, or worse on the whole, than the Authorized Version can the further question arise of its being on the one hand authoritatively introduced into congregational use, or on the other hand set aside and refused (as it stands) for this purpose, and subjected hereafter to such manipulation as may amount in effect to a re-revision under such management as may be thought trustworthy for so difficult and delicate a task. How far such a treatment of the Revised Version may be sanctioned by rules of law or by principles of equity, it will be for others to enquire if the occasion should arise.

At the present stage of the controversy it has seemed to me not altogether unseasonable to furnish a few illustrations of the manner in which the anxious and somewhat thankless office of the men who have laboured together for more than ten years in the

endeavour to revise the Version of A.D. 1611 has by them been discharged. It was quite evident to every reflecting person that a strong prejudice would be sure to show itself, as time went on, against any changes actually made in the particular form of the English Scriptures which had gathered around it so many precious associations. One of the Revisers themselves, writing twenty years ago upon the possibility of such a work being undertaken, used the following expressions, in justification of some English renderings of his own from the Greek Testament. "No one will imagine that the bald and stiff translations prefixed to these Lectures are offered as substitutes for the graceful and idiomatic sentences which correspond to them in the Authorized Version. To supplement is not to supersede. And the more carefully our Congregations are instructed in the true meaning, the literal language, of the original Word of Inspiration, the less need will there be for a reconstruction of its popular form. The English Bible is a standard of taste, a model of lan-

guage, a specimen of dignified simplicity. More than this, it is the heirloom of all families, and the link between successive generations of the faithful. It is easy to detect the blemishes: but where is the hand to which we would entrust its reformation?"

Thought moves quickly in these times, and that which was then spoken of as a remote and improbable contingency has become a fact accomplished, with which the world has to deal. Under the highest and most formal sanction which the Church of England, by the larger of its two Convocations, could give to the enterprise, the Authorized Version has been subjected to a searching process of examination, both as to its text and as to its language, and the result is the Version now on its trial, with what eventual issues it is impossible to foretell.

The least interesting part of the question is that which affects the exactness of the adherence of the Revisers to the terms laid down for them by Convocation. Not



immaterial as it affects themselves, it is entirely beside the mark as to the value of the work done. It was, I believe, an impossibility in the nature of things, that a company of earnest and competent men should enter upon such an undertaking with their hands tied by any number or any stringency of rules as to the 'thus far and no farther.' To be met at every turn by the question, 'Is this important?' or, 'Will not this do?' would be fatal to that sense of honest freedom in representing as exactly as possible the very word written by inspiration of God, which alone could give spirit to the workmen or thoroughness to the work.

I am far from suggesting that the rules laid down by the original instructions of Convocation were in any respect broken. I only desire to shift the discussion from a region in which it can have only a passing and personal interest, into a sphere of vital and permanent concern, affecting the interpretation of God's Word to generations yet unborn.

If any one imagines that a council of

five and twenty men could uniformly arrive at unanimous conclusions, or counts it a reflexion upon the recent Revision that it should be avowed by persons engaged in it that the results in many particulars were not precisely those for which he himself voted; this is to betray a scanty experience of human dealing even in matters of far less keen anxiety than the text or translation of the Bible. A man of sense and a man of modesty learns to defer to the decisions of a majority, with something better than a sullen or reluctant acquiescence—rather with the feeling that he himself may easily have been mistaken, whether in taste or judgment, whether from defective knowledge or from unconscious prepossession.

In one respect it was, I think, unavoidable that this deference should be ready and respectful. Questions affecting the text of the Greek Testament are confessedly within the grasp of a limited number of theologians. What has been recently said in reference to matters of scientific evidence in courts of justice has an obvious application to discussions

in large bodies upon textual criticism. "There is everywhere a growing disposition to put more and more trust in experts, and to place little confidence in the view that any man gifted with common sense can form a sound opinion about anything. Tribunals of experts, or tribunals assisted by assessors, are in favour: the advantage of the presence of knowledge as well as good intentions on the judgment-seat is admitted; and it is not improbable that we shall have to remodel some parts of our procedure in the light of this view." It was unavoidable that men who have given a lifetime to the criticism of the text should exercise a powerful influence upon the judgment of their less qualified colleagues on points involving alterations of reading liable to affect the rendering. Nearly a quarter of a century ago I was privileged to use the labours of Dr Westcott in the formation of the text for an edition of the Epistle to the Romans. What was said ten years afterwards of the impression made by his recension of the text of that Epistle can be said still, and with added emphasis, of alterations

in which his influence, and that of his learned coadjutor Dr Hort, prevailed in the more recent labours of the Revisers. "It is deeply interesting to take note of the process of thought and feeling which attends in one's own mind the presentation of some unfamiliar reading. At first sight the suggestion is repelled as unintelligible, startling, almost shocking. By degrees, light dawns upon it—it finds its plea and its palliation. At last, in many instances, it is accepted as adding force and beauty to the context, and a conviction gradually forms itself that thus and not otherwise was it written." If it were worth while to give an example or two of what is thus generally stated, I would instance the remarkable changes introduced into the text of the Revised Version in Matthew xix. 17, Mark vii. 19, Romans iv. 19, and Colossians ii. 18.

In all such alterations of the text, as well as in all departures of the most minute kind from the rendering, of the Authorized Version, it ought not to be forgotten that a clear majority of two-thirds of the members of the Company present was requisite in each case

to effect them. If in a gathering of twenty persons, with all the prepossessions of English readers of the Bible strong in them, not seven were found to prefer the old reading or the old rendering, it can scarcely be said that the arguments for retaining it were overwhelming. If any alteration was made without the actual vote of such a majority, it was because not one person present cared so much as to ask a vote upon it. It would be a charge of incompetence more vehement (if possible) than any that has yet been brought against them, to assert that, with such advantages for enforcing the maintenance of the existing Version, the Revisers had ignorantly or wantonly sacrificed it.

The question must always be a difficult one, and it recurs in each line of holy Scripture, what is the exact point of transition from the literal to the barbarous, in translating into 'the tongue wherein we were born' the wonderful Word of God. The opinion of individual men may be expected to be at once positive and fallible as to the limits of the possible and the impossible in the details



of this reproduction. But upon the general principle there can scarcely be a difference of judgment—that the aim must be to approach as closely to the form of the one language as the idiom of the other language will permit. A certain degree even of severity and ruggedness will be tolerated, if by it alone the fullness and the precision of the thought can be represented. There *is* doubtless a degree of literalness which is servile and repulsive. To hit the mean is the difficulty. In some of the instances selected for comment in this Volume, an apology has been made for some harshness of rendering, on the ground of the importance of the revelation of which only the one half could be expressed in easier and smoother phrase.

With all the reverence due to the Version now between two and three centuries old, it must be said with all plainness that it too has its clumsy and awkward passages which it is untruthful to palliate or to ignore. “And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of

the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind"...“Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ”...“Having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly, to preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man’s line of things made ready to our hand”...it is idle to say that such sentences, gathered one from each of three contiguous chapters of one of St Paul’s Epistles, as they stand in the Authorized Version, possess any charm of rhythm, or any lucidity of phrase, or any sanctity of prescription, to give them a right to look with disdain or horror upon the least mellifluous of the utterances which would replace them in the Revised: And when we note the utter indifference of the Authorized Version to many clearly marked and universally recognized peculiarities of the original, and the absolute licence with which it runs riot in its translation of one and the same Greek word into various English equivalents—amounting, in one no-

torious instance, to the rendering of a single Greek verb into seventeen English forms in the seven and twenty instances of its occurrence—we must in common justice modify our idolatry while we do not stint our commendation, and not suffer ourselves to forget that there was a reason for attempting revision, however little successful we may pronounce the result.

Two practical difficulties lie before us in the future, and they cannot too seriously be taken into account.

Will the English people acquiesce in the reading and hearing, as among the utterances of God's Word, of passages marked now as spurious by the unanimous sentence of all competent judges, or of renderings notoriously false to the Greek, and giving in some cases a sense opposite to that which they were unquestionably designed to convey? It seems as though matters could scarcely be left as they are for one day after the calm verdict of the English Christian world has been given upon the questions involved in this Revision. This is no plea

for haste in deciding, but it is an argument against that indefinite postponement of the whole matter, which some have advocated, into a generation which shall be born.

The other difficulty is yet more urgent. There are not wanting indications of a probable acceptance by the American people on the one hand, and by the great English Non-conformist bodies on the other, of the Revised Version, in the formation of which, by an act of simple justice, they have been admitted to an honourable participation. No misfortune could be more lamentable, no catastrophe is more earnestly to be deprecated, than that which should destroy the one link of union which has hitherto bound together the English-speaking race, amidst whatever varieties of place or thought, of government or doctrine—the possession of a common Bible. Hitherto there has been one intelligible sense, at all events, in which we could speak of transatlantic and even of non-conforming members of the one Church of England. A heavy blow will have been struck at this unity of feeling and worship, if unhappily

the time should ever arrive when the race shall have its two Bibles—more especially if it shall come to be known that the Bible of America and of the Non-conformist is far nearer in accuracy, however it may be in beauty, to the original Word itself, than the Bible tenaciously clung to by the English Episcopalian.

In the foreview of such possibilities, it may not be unreasonable to recommend a reverent tone at least, if not a dispassionate judgment, to all those who shall take part in that controversy of the two Versions, to which the following pages are offered as a slight, a humble, and a respectful contribution.

LLANDAFF,

*May 2, 1882.*

#### NOTE.

The texts of the Sermons are printed from the Version of 1611. It is not wholly unimportant to remind ourselves of the exact spelling and punctuation of that which alone can in any sense be called the Authorized Version; and at the same time of the extent to which the English Public is habitually using what may be called without offence (as to its shape and form at least) rather the Printers' Bible than the Bible of King James.



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Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and giuen him a Name which is aboue euery name:

That at the Name of Iesus euery knee should bow.

ness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient *even* unto death, yea, the death of the cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Iesus every knee should bow.

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Let vs drawe neere with a true heart in full assurance of faith, hauiug our hearts sprinkled from an euill conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

(*Revised.*)

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For this cause I bow my knees  
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I.

*PERSONALITY OF THE GOSPEL.*



# I.

## PERSONALITY OF THE GOSPEL.

### I TIMOTHY III. 16.

(*Authorized.*)

And without controuersie, great is the mysterie of godlinesse: God was manifest in the flesh, iustified in the Spirit, scene of Angels, preached vnto the Gentiles, beleeued on in the world, receiued vp into glory.

(*Revised.*)

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; <sup>1</sup>He who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, received up in glory.

<sup>1</sup> The word *God*, in place of *He who*, rests on no sufficient ancient evidence. Some ancient authorities read *which*.

THE subjects of this brief course of Sermons are to be some of the texts in which the Revised Version of the New Testament differs from the Authorized. The thoughts of the English Church—using that word in its largest sense, for the English-speaking Christian world—are at this time intently, I might say intensely, fixed upon the differences between these two forms and shapes of the second volume of Holy Scripture. It is wonderful, it is delightful,

to see how keen is the interest of England in her Bible—how jealously it is watched, how sensitively it is guarded—insomuch that we seem to hear her addressing it in words written of old, ‘Whoso toucheth thee toucheth the apple of mine eye.’ If the only result of the recent Revision were to bring out this fact, the work itself would not have been quite in vain.

Earnestness sometimes passes into vehemence, and vehemence almost into violence. It is scarcely credible with what heat and haste, with what lack of thought and knowledge, men have spoken and written upon this Revision. They have succeeded, I think, in checking its course—perhaps even in damaging it for the moment. What is good in it will live, for all that: if there is any bad thing in it, let it die. One thing, I think, may be said with full certainty, that, if the Revised Version never should replace the Authorized, it will at least be, with all reasonable persons, its inseparable companion. They will find in it a flood of light poured upon many of the dark sayings of the other; a light far beyond that of any number of notes and commentaries; a light such as will supply all that is needful to humble and praying hearts for the edifying study of that

Word of which it is written, 'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for education in righteousness.'

This is all that I think it proper to say in the way of introduction to these Sermons on a few of the texts in which the two Versions differ. There shall be nothing of criticism, and nothing of controversy, in the treatment of them here : the holy place and the holy season alike forbid these. The choice of the texts will be guided by their weight and importance as disclosures of Divine truth ; and the rest must be done by the seriousness of those who speak and listen, and by their united prayer for His blessing, without whom nothing is strong and nothing is holy.

We have before us this evening a magnificent summary of Gospel truth ; involving one alteration, alike of reading and rendering, just of that kind which challenges some superficial and passing opposition, but which, when calmly and quietly looked into, turns rather for a testimony. The Authorized Version reads, 'God was manifest in the flesh ;' the Revised Version reads, 'He who was manifested in the flesh :' and the hot and headlong champion of the truth as it is in Jesus exclaims, 'See how these

men have dealt with one of the most express testimonies of Scripture to the Divinity of our Lord and Saviour !’

It is no true homage to a faith founded upon the rock, to seek to prop it by dubious arguments. ‘The foundation of God standeth sure,’ and asks no help from precarious or uncandid sources. Too often it is forgotten that the one only question which a Christian ought to ask about a text of the Bible, is not, What am I used to? and not, What would fall in with my taste or my liking or my view of the Gospel? but, What hath God said? what is the exact word written, so far as the pious toil and search of God-fearing men can verify it by the help of all the learning and all the experience which they can bring to bear upon it? When he knows this, he will waste no silly regrets upon a particular clause or two, which truth must deprive them of, saying in so many words, ‘Christ is God’—for he knows that the Deity of Jesus Christ, asserted here and there in so many words, is interwoven everywhere with the whole teaching of Scripture, and will survive all the criticism of all the learning of all the ages, even though a verse in one of St John’s Epistles about the three heavenly Witnesses must be rejected as the spurious fabrication of a com-

paratively late century and a human and very mundane hand.

In the passage before us the Authorized Version reads, 'God was manifest,' and the Revised Version reads, 'He who was manifested.' The alteration is made on evidence which convinces all but a few who will keep at all costs a favourite argument. The reading of all the great Manuscripts, and of all the early Versions, is either 'who' or 'which'—a relative certainly, and the masculine relative on every ground prevailing. The difference in the great Manuscripts between the Greek word for 'God' and the Greek word for 'who' consists entirely in the presence or absence of a little line across, and another little line above, the letter which is in its form a simple circle. In our own British Museum you may discern by actual examination the process by which, indisputably, the 'who' has been transubstantiated into 'God.' It is an instructive example of those 'pious frauds' which have in all manner of ways offered their objectionable aid to the cause of Divine truth.

When you think of it, does the name of God suit so very satisfactorily each of the six clauses to which the Authorized Version, made from what is called the Received text, prefixes it? 'God was manifest-

ed in the flesh'—so far well. But 'God was justified in the Spirit,' 'God was seen of Angels,' 'God was received up into glory'—does all this commend itself as a form of expression Scripturally and theologically appropriate? To some minds, habituated to such thought, there is a ring in it not quite sound: we seem to descry the finger of the busy and anxious meddler, who would fain turn an indirect into a direct and explicit testimony to the orthodox faith, to the Christian revelation, of the Word made flesh.

On the other hand, and side by side with this, study the revised reading, and see what it says to you.

St Paul has been telling his beloved correspondent why he writes to him. He has left him at Ephesus to manage the Churches in his own absence. He hopes soon to return. He is at large once again, between his two imprisonments, and Ephesus is one of his centres. Still the Churches are many, in Asia and Europe—he has made many promises, and emergencies are daily arising—he may tarry long. Then he writes to tell Timothy how to conduct himself in that 'house of God,' that living 'assembly of the living God,' which is for the present consigned to his charge. The Church is the 'pillar



and ground of the truth'—the keeper of the holy archives, the witness below to the reality of things heavenly, the standing repository of the tradition of doctrine, the perpetual replenisher of the ministry which pleads for God with men. The word 'truth' which closes the 15th verse suggests the 16th. 'And confessedly great,' majestic and all-important, 'is the mystery of godliness'—in other words, the secret, the revealed secret, which has in it all religion and all reverence that is worth the name—'the mystery'—and what is it? The mystery is a Person—'He who was' in the first place 'manifested in the flesh.'

'The mystery—who.' The mystery of our faith is a Person. Does not the very expression speak its genuineness? Is it not exactly what St Paul says to the Colossians—'to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory'? and in another verse of the same Epistle, when rightly read and rightly rendered, 'that they may know the mystery of God, even Christ, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden'? 'The mystery of godliness' is 'He who was manifested in the flesh.'

And have we lost the Divinity of Christ by

reading, for 'God,' 'who'? Judge ye. 'Manifested in flesh'—do we say that of one who is a mere man? Do we speak of the very chiefest of saints or heroes as having at his birth been 'manifested in flesh'? The very words assert pre-existence. He who is manifested in flesh *was* before. Can any words point us back more significantly to the Eternal Word, who was in the beginning with God, and was God, and who in the fulness of time was made flesh, that He might first tabernacle among us, and then, risen and exalted, give us out of His fulness grace for grace?

As elsewhere, so here, truth is its own witness. I challenge the judgment of such as have understanding, for the superiority of the revised phrase. To make the whole Gospel Christ, and then say that He was manifested in flesh, is to give Him a reality of glory far greater, because more striking and more surprising, than to use the clumsier and the more prosaic expression which would first declare in so many words that God was manifested, and then go on to say that God was justified in spirit, and that God appeared to Angels, and that God was received up into glory.

We are ready now to give ourselves for a few moments to the study of this remarkable text as a

whole. We have six brief clauses descriptive of that 'mystery of godliness' which is, being interpreted, our Lord Himself. There is something about them of a rhetorical, almost of a poetical, character. Some have seen in them the lines of a Christian hymn. Others might suggest that they were one of those 'faithful sayings' of which these latest Epistles of St Paul give so many examples; formulas of truth and faith, such as might cheer the spirit and nerve the courage of Christian confessors and martyrs during dark nights of imprisonment or through the last scenes of conflict and torture. Some such supposition seems needful to account for the exquisite phraseology, the rhythmical run, and the antithetical balance, of the wonderful sentence before us.

It seems naturally to fall into three portions, each of two clauses. We may arrange them thus.

First, that mystery of godliness, which is a Person, was 'manifested in flesh,' and 'justified in spirit.' The contrast is that of St Peter—'being put to death in flesh, but quickened in spirit.' The bodily part, and the spiritual part, of the Word made flesh, the Incarnate Christ, are contrasted with each other. St Peter is speaking of the separation of body and spirit which took place in

the death of Christ. The putting to death of the body was itself a quickening of the spirit, enduing it with a more vital energy for the discharge of that special mission to 'spirits in prison' which occupied a portion of the interval between the death and the resurrection. Using the same distinction of bodily and spiritual, St Paul says here that the Word made flesh was 'justified in spirit.' The expression is like that of the Gospels, 'Wisdom is justified of her children;' that is, is seen and felt to be what she is, by those who are qualified to judge her. Christ manifested in flesh was shown and seen in His true character, as the Incarnate Word, by the beauty and glory of His life-work as inspired and impregnated with the Holy Spirit given to Him (as St John writes) not by measure. 'The Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us'—that is the first clause: 'and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth'—that is the second. 'Manifested in flesh—justified in spirit.'

The next pair of clauses presents a greater difficulty. 'Seen of angels, preached among the nations.'

It is commonly supposed that we have here an appearance of Christ to the holy Angels, of

which the Gospels tell nothing, on His return into heaven at the Ascension, when for the first time He became visible to the holy Angels, having been invisible to them, in His Divine Nature, prior to Incarnation. There is much in this view to challenge, both in proof and meaning. We venture upon a different suggestion.

The Greek word 'angel' means 'messenger.' Though commonly appropriated in Scripture to those spiritual beings who behold the face of God in heaven and are sent forth to minister on earth to the heirs of salvation, there are not wanting passages in which it simply means 'messenger:' as where the Baptist is called God's 'angel' sent before Jesus—or where John's messengers, sent to ask Jesus, 'Art thou He that should come?' are called in the Greek 'John's angels'—or where, according to the common interpretation, the bishops of the seven Churches, in the opening chapters of the Apocalypse, are called the 'angels' of the Churches over which they preside. Considering then the studied and exquisite style of the passage before us, it does not seem impossible to understand by 'angels' here Christ's chosen 'messengers,' the twelve Apostles first and foremost, to whom He 'appeared' (it is the word always used

in this connexion) after His resurrection, thus qualifying them to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth. And thus the combined clauses, 'seen of angels, preached among the nations,' fall into beautiful harmony with each other, and set before us exactly that view of the work of 'the mystery of godliness' which is given in the 10th chapter of the Acts, 'Him God raised up the third day, and showed Him openly, not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead: and He commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is He which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.' 'Seen of certain chosen messengers,' and then by their ministry 'preached among the nations.'

There remains yet one pair of clauses—'Believed on in the world, received up in glory.' The position of the last clause of all proves conclusively that we are not to look for a chronological order in the six particulars: for, if so, the preaching of the Gospel would be placed before the Ascension—a contradiction alike of fact and of Scripture. Antithesis, not sequence, is the key to the arrangement.

And so here. The 'faithful saying' ends as it began, with a contrast—in this case between the

Gospel below and its great Subject and Substance in heaven—it militant on earth, He reigning in glory.

A very brief paraphrase may fitly close the interpretation.

My son Timothy ! I charge thee that thou keep the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. Have ever printed in thy remembrance the greatness of the good deposit. The Gospel is a mystery—a secret, once, for long ages, hidden, now told in the ear of faith. That secret is the revelation of a Person. ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God—and the Word was made flesh, and we beheld His glory.’ ‘Manifested in flesh, justified in spirit.’ One with us in all the infirmities, trials, and temptations of humanity, yet without sin ; declared to be the Son of God by the perfectness of a spiritual obedience, even unto death, yea, the death of the cross—then by resurrection from the dead, to be the life of them that believe. To His chosen witnesses He showed Himself alive after His passion, and sent them forth into all the world as His messengers and His heralds. In all the world He hath already them that know Him—He Himself is exalted to be Lord both of the

dead and living, Head over all things to the Church which is His body.

On this first day of Lent we are assembled in a Church which for all but seven centuries has been a monument of the faith of Christ in this metropolis of England. I cannot think it an insignificant matter, that at the end of this 19th century of the Gospel we should have had one point pressed upon us to-night—the Personality of our religion. Our text to-night has been one small, very small word—the word ‘Who.’ ‘The mystery of godliness’ is in form neuter—it is so in the Greek, it is naturally so taken in English. And yet this ‘mystery’ is followed by a relative in the masculine. ‘Great is the mystery of godliness,’ not ‘which,’ but ‘who, was manifested in flesh.’

Brethren, the change from the Authorized to the Revised Version is pregnant with suggestion.

There be many that say, The Gospel is a *thing*—a good thing, a pious thing, a moral and even a rational thing—a thing which would make us all better men, if we walked in its precepts. There be many that say *more* than this—The Gospel is a revelation—a revelation of truth and doctrine—telling us of God manifest in the flesh, with many great inferences and momentous consequences—



embodied in Creeds, formularies, and Catechisms—let us earnestly contend for the faith once for all delivered.

But the Revised Version of the New Testament says *this* to us—and if it were its only change, it would have been worth ten years of labour—The mystery of godliness, the revealed secret which has in it ‘reverence,’ the right feeling and attitude of the soul towards God its Author and Object of being, is a Person—Incarnate, justified, attested, heralded, believed, glorified—a Person whom to know is life, whom to serve is freedom. He is not a doctrine, nor a book, nor a Creed, nor a Church—He is a Person. Do you hear Him speak? Do you speak to Him? Are you aware that He has an ear, and that He has a voice? that He speaks still, as He spoke once to Saul of Tarsus, as He spoke oftentimes to the Apostle Paul, in the hearts and souls of His saints, telling them what to do for His glory and for the good of His people—revealing to them the faults of their characters and the perils which beset their lives—comforting them in sorrow, strengthening them in weakness, raising them when they fall, and gathering them when they go astray?

To have passed from the doctrine into the life, from the thing into the Person, from the

reading and talking and hearing about Him into the communicating and conversing and communing with Him—how vast the difference, how vital the transition! If this Lent might bring any one from the hearing of Him with the hearing of the ear to the seeing Him with the soul's eye, it would be worth the burning of all the theologies to purchase this. Try it, each one—as an experiment first of all, if it must be so—try whether the arm is palsied which once cleansed the leper and raised the dead—try whether the ear is dulled, which once heard the 'Lord help me,' and heard but to do, though the thing asked was the thing impossible to flesh and blood. Then will you remember for all coming time the 'Who' of this text—'the mystery of godliness WHO' will be your religion of the future—and having served for your generation a living Person here, you will go, when He calls, into the world of the invisible, saying, 'I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ—which is far better.'

II.

*CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE AS  
STATED BY CHRIST.*



## II.

### CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE AS STATED BY CHRIST.

JOHN V. 35, 36...39, 40.

*(Authorized.)*

He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to reioyce in his light.

But I haue greater witnesse then that of Iohn...

Search the Scriptures, for in them ye thinke ye haue eternall life, and they are they which testifie of me.

And ye will not come to me, that ye might haue life.

*(Revised.)*

He was the lamp that burneth and shineth: and ye were willing to reioyce for a season in his light. But the witness which I have is greater than *that of* John...<sup>1</sup> Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me; and ye will not come to me, that ye may have life.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *Search the scriptures.*

WE enter to-night into the heart of a great Scripture. Our Lord Himself is here on His trial, before the world that was then, and before the world that is now—and He is calling witnesses. ‘If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.’ The real Saviour will not be taken on

trust. That kind of 'leap in the dark' which finds favour with many, which with some is made even the test of faith, finds no favour with Him. The faith He asks is a faith which can give account of itself. 'Be ready always,' He says to His disciples, 'to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you—yea, with meekness and fear.' Would that that voice had always found its echo in Christians—that voice which counsels the readiness to give a reason for believing; that voice which counsels meekness in the doing so, as conscious of unworthiness—fear in the doing so, as feeling the solemnity of the subject.

The Saviour tells us in this great Scripture what is His evidence. The common reader, following the guidance of the heading of the chapter in the Authorized Version, has imagined Him to call a whole group and series of witnesses. 'He reproveth them,' says that heading, 'shewing by the testimony of His Father, of John, of His works, and of the Scriptures, who He is.' And I think that the Authorized Version, by its disregard (in some places) of the exact Greek idiom, favoured this view. We are concerned to-night not with any changes of reading, but only of rendering. Last week we were called, as an act of honesty, to

sacrifice an express for an implicit testimony to the Divinity of our Lord. And I think we saw that, in doing so, we were no losers; on the contrary, that we were brought by it to a deeply instructive thought, that of the Personality of the Gospel—the mystery of our religion is a Person, who was from eternity, and was manifested in time. To-night we have a different subject. We are to try to follow our Lord Himself through a series of brief sentences, in which a few small changes made by the Revised Version, in the direction of greater closeness and accuracy of rendering, have both considerably modified the interpretation of the passage, and thrown a wonderful light upon several of its constituent parts.

The passage before us is comprised between the 31st verse and the 40th.

‘If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true. It is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which He witnesseth of me is true.’ Who is this witness? At first sight we might suppose that it is John the Baptist, whose name occurs in the verse following. It is not so. On the contrary, our Lord expressly supersedes the Baptist’s testimony by another. ‘Ye’ (emphatic in the Greek) ‘have sent unto John’

—the reference is to the solemn deputation of priests and Levites described in the first chapter—‘and he hath borne witness’—it is still on record—‘unto the truth. But the witness which *I* receive’—unlike you—‘is not from a human being: howbeit I say these things,’ I refer thus to the witness of John, ‘that ye may be saved.’ You may hear him, when you will not hear me. ‘He was the lamp that burneth and shineth’ till the day dawn and the shadows flee. The Authorized Version obliterates the very point of the statement. ‘He was a burning and a shining light.’ Whereas the whole force lies in the contrast between the ‘lamp shining in a dark place’ and during the dark hours, and the magnificent orb of day to which Christ compares Himself when He says again and again, ‘I am the light of the world.’

John was the lamp of night, ‘kindled and shining.’ The word ‘kindled’ is passive; and I think that it implies dependence upon, and therefore inferiority to, the Divine kindler—but let that pass. ‘He was the lamp, that burneth and shineth: and ye were willing to rejoice for an hour in his light. But the witness which *I* have is greater than that of John.’ In appealing to his testimony, I condescend to your level, if perhaps I may thus



win you towards the truth. But my real witness is greater than any human testimony—‘for the works which the Father hath given me to accomplish, the works themselves which I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.’

We have reached here the witness, and the one witness—though that one witness has a twofold utterance. The Father is the witness. But the Father speaks in two voices—an outward voice and an inward. The outward voice is, the works of Christ. Not the miracles only or chiefly. The ‘works’ are the whole life of the Word made flesh. The gracious words, the holy example, the acts of beneficence, the breathings of sympathy, the resistless hand of power, the exhaustless heart of love.

This is one half, the outward half, of the Father’s witness. He who looks upon these, and can ascribe these either to Satanic agency or to a merely human benevolence, is out of the pale of reasoning: he has stopped his ears, he is blind to the light of day. But there is a second department of evidence, though the witness is still one, and still Divine. ‘And the Father who sent me, He hath borne witness of me.’ Not by audible voice indeed, and not by visible appearance: ‘God is spirit:’

there is one way, and one only, in which He can hold personal communication with the souls which He has made : and of this one way you are ignorant—‘ye have not His word abiding in you.’

The ‘word’ here may mean Scripture—the word of Divine revelation—which ought to be so read and marked, so learned and digested, as to have its lodgment and abiding place within—in default of which it fails of its work, leaving it superficial and not edifying. Or it may refer to that more general Divine teaching, which is not of the letter at all ; that preparation of the heart, that alertness of the conscience, that sense of relationship to God as the Father, which waits not for books or doctrines, which is prior and preliminary to revelation itself, abiding in the man, making him appreciative and receptive of the other voice, come when it may and how it may, because it speaks from a home yearned after in exile, and speaks in the known accents of the very Author and Owner of the being. If this voice had been in you, you would have recognized the other : but now, ‘whom He sent forth, Him ye believe not.’

These are the links of thought and speech which unite the first half of the text to the second. ‘Ye have not the word abiding in you ; and

therefore, though ye search the very Scriptures, ye find not the Saviour in them.'

There are some doubtless who say, 'These Revisers have first robbed us of several texts which expressly called Jesus God, and now they go on to deprive us of an express command to search the Scriptures.' It is known to many whom I address this evening, that the same word in the Greek is indicative and imperative—the choice is open between them. In all candour the text must give the one and the margin the other. It is a question, not of reading, and not of construing—it is a question of sense and of context. Whether of the two, 'Search the Scriptures,' or 'Ye search the Scriptures,' gives in this place the more consistent and harmonious idea? For the one it may be said, 'Our Lord appeals to the Scriptures as bearing a second, third, or fourth witness to His Divine Sonship. First John, then the works, then the Father, now the Old Testament Scriptures, are called as His witnesses. We have reached that fourth witness, and He bids us to examine it.' At first sight, on a superficial view, this is plausible. And we all admit that the command to search the Old Testament Scriptures is consistent with the language of the New Testament and of our Lord

Himself everywhere. St Peter, in a passage of his second Epistle, says of 'the prophetic word' generally, 'Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a murky place until the day dawn.'

Still, if the foregoing sketch has been accepted as true, I cannot doubt which of the two equally possible renderings will rather commend itself to your judgment. We stand at this point. The witness is one. The Father speaking in the 'works,' the Father speaking in the 'word,' has alike spoken in vain. They have refused their allegiance to Christ in both. How naturally does it follow, 'Ye search the Scriptures,' ye spend a life in the study, 'because *ye* think,' ye yourselves, without my bidding you, 'that ye have in them eternal life'—and those Scriptures *are* what bear witness of me—'and yet,' with all this—all this 'searching' on your part, and all this 'witnessing' on theirs—'ye will not come to me, that ye may have life.'

'He was the lamp that burneth and shineth'—  
'I am the light of the world.'

Brethren, it is an old reflection—the Saviour was not perfect man if He was not also very God. To speak of His own chivalrous, heroic, saintly, martyred Baptist as the lamp, Himself being the sun, would have been an ingratitude, would have been

a boastfulness, would have been an arrogance, if He had Himself been man only. There is no evading of this dilemma. Interwoven with the very texture of the Gospels there is a claim of Deity which cannot be torn out of it. Not the fourth Gospel more than the first three will have Christ for God. Brethren, the question is forced upon us—are we ready to say to Him, ‘My Lord and my God?’

‘Search the Scriptures’—imperative or indicative, the duty is unaffected. If imperative, the command is express: if indicative, it is taken for granted. Of course ye search the Scriptures—hath God spoken, hath God caused to be written, and man is not to take the trouble to search and to scrutinize? How shameful the contrast between the Israelite and the Christian Pharisee! How shocking the neglect of the two-volumed Bible, in comparison of the one-volumed—of the Bible which contains prophecy and fulfilment, shadow and substance, dark saying and saying lighted up by the sunbeam, in comparison with the treatment of parchments multiplied only with lavish expenditure of toil and substance, for the use of the select few, of the priest and the scribe who kept then in their hands the key of knowledge.

‘Search the Scriptures’—the reproach is keen, read in the imperative. The men of old time lived in their Scriptures. Scribe and Pharisee gave a life-time to the study—could tell you the number of verses, and the number of words and the number of letters in each verse—worshipped, idolized, deified the letter. And what came of it? The Son of God came, and they would not come to Him.

How is it now? Again there is a study, and a measuring and counting, and a deifying of the letter. Men are in disgrace who so much as turn upon it the microscope of scholarship, or the microscope of comparison, or the microscope of intelligence—they are accused of bringing in reason where revelation should reign, of seeing a human element in the sacred books of an Inspiration Divine. The very vestment and cerecloth of Revelation, its Version two and a half centuries old, is held to be profaned by a revision and a re-rendering. ‘The tradition of the elders’ is supreme over the text and over the form of the word God-inspired. We cannot accept (men say) what we are not used to—away from the very precinct and vestibule of the sanctuary, ye who cannot see with the eyes or hear with the ears of the men who have been at least two centuries dead!

The worshippers of the letter are many amongst us—and too often it is the mere indolence of long use, it is the mere distaste of laziness and almost of superstition, which would deprive the common people, the intelligent, truth-loving, hungering and thirsting common people, of the advantage of a nearer access to the very fountain of truth itself, as God opened it eighteen hundred years ago in the inspired utterances of inspired men who had companied with the Incarnate Word dwelling among us, or else had diligently traced by accurate self-sacrificing search the stream of the original tradition.

But, many as are the lessons of the imperative rendering, we must feel that those of the indicative are ampler yet and more humbling. ‘Ye search the Scriptures—ye will not come to me.’

There is an abuse, as well as a use, of the Bible itself. We all can tell how the Scribes and Pharisees misused their Bible. We can all recount the fancies and follies by which they turned into lying vanities the sacred scrolls which they were never weary of glorifying. How strange, we say, how perverse, the infatuation which could not see Jesus Christ in the 22nd Psalm, in the 45th Psalm, in the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, or the 9th chapter of Daniel. We can all echo the words, ‘But

their minds were blinded'—or, 'But to this day in the reading of the Old Testament the veil is upon their heart.'

Brethren, the Scribes and Pharisees were human beings, and the nature which was in them is in all of us till it is transfigured and irradiated by grace. It is not the mere fact that since their day a second Volume has been added to the Bible, and it is not the mere fact that we were made Christians in Infant Baptism, or that we have been educated in Evangelical truth, which can secure us from the Rabbinical fancies or from the Pharisaical prejudices which made the men of old time search the Scriptures and not come to Christ. 'God is not unrighteous' that He should make distinctions which are no differences between man and man, or excuse us from the labour and travail through which alone any of the fallen race can become wise unto salvation.

Therefore, while we rejoice in the multiplication of copies of the holy Scriptures by means of the new miracles of the printing-press, and while we rejoice in the growing honour paid to the Bible in the common talk of Christians, and while we rejoice in the ever gathering interest in the text and in the translation of God's Word, making it a perilous



adventure so much as to recognize in it a human as well as a Divine element, or to demand the exercise of sense as well as of spirit for its interpretation ; we do feel for others, because we do feel in ourselves, how much of spiritual risk there is in all this searching—how possible it is for a man to ‘search’ through a lifetime and never ‘come to Christ’—on how many sunken rocks we may all make shipwreck, under how many summer skies and amidst how many ‘south winds blowing softly’ we may so navigate our bark as never to reach the haven.

There is a danger—let none gainsay or make light of it—in the critical and exegetical study. There is a fascination in the investigation of words and idioms, there is a seduction in the comparison of commentaries, there is a glamour in the presentation of thoughts and views, which may draw aside the most diligent student into some by-path of intellectual pleasure the very direction of which is neither Christ-ward nor heaven-ward, the whole issue of which may be as little spiritual as a life spent in the illustration of the most entirely human author. The ‘scribe well instructed *unto* the kingdom’ may be less than the very least within it.

But besides this—which does not at all come

home to many in the congregation—who has not found himself, in reading his Bible, quite apart and aloof from any spiritual profiting? How apt are we to imagine that reading the Bible is an act of devotion—that it does us good, just as prayer does, by the very exercise. Whereas we may begin, continue, and end our Sunday portion or our daily portion of the sacred study without even entering the presence-chamber—without so much as opening the window toward Jerusalem, or setting the face toward the mercy-seat. ‘Ye search the Scriptures—ye never come to me.’

And yet perhaps how narrowly may we have missed Him! ‘They are they which testify of me.’ They are full of Christ. ‘The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.’ He was there, all the time—but we thought it enough to know it, and never took the one little step to come to Him.

We know indeed that He is in heaven and we are upon earth—that never till we have ‘put off’ and ‘put on’ can we see Him as He is. We know too that it is not always they who tell us that they visit Him, and not always they who speak most confidently of their experiences and of their evidences, who reflect Him most powerfully in the tone and spirit of their dealing. For ourselves we do not

desire that sort of coming to Him which is not perfectly calm and perfectly practical. 'Visions and revelations of the Lord' were granted, we know, to one of old time—but he was caught into the third heaven to receive them, and when he came back to earth he said that they were not lawful for a man to utter.

Yet there *is* a coming to Jesus which is open to all and necessary for all—inasmuch that, if we have it not, all the searching of the Scriptures in the world is unprofitable for us and vain. Shall we try to picture it to ourselves in all simplicity and truth?

It is a spiritual coming—that is its condition. It would not be helped by the miraculous or the supernatural—unless by the miraculous and the supernatural we mean the necessary mysteriousness of all converse between spirit and spirit. The 'coming' is made by Jesus Himself in the next following chapter equivalent to, synonymous with, believing. 'He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.' Faith, we know, is the soul's sight: to believe is to see with the soul, as common sight is seeing with the body. To be persuaded that Christ is, and is that He is; to be persuaded of

His life at this moment as the Person who has done for us and suffered for us that which the Gospel tells of; to be persuaded that He sees and hears and answers, as God with us, God for us, God in us, one with the Father and one also with the Spirit—and, being thus persuaded, to deal with Him as that which He is, trusting Him, applying to Him, communing with Him, living to Him; to place ourselves in His hands unreservedly to do and to suffer, to have and to be, to live, and to die, and to live for ever—this is something of the ‘coming’ spoken of. It is no involuntary or casual act—it must be prayed for, it must be tried for, it must be practised with diligence. The Bible itself, full as it is of Christ, must be studied in Christ, and not apart from Him; must be read as God’s oracle—in humility, in reverence, in prayer, with great expectations, and in a spirit of sonship.

Then, though we may often be disappointed and always self-abased in the searching of the Scriptures, we shall return day by day to what the Bible itself calls ‘the river of God’s pleasures:’ in His light, by degrees, we shall begin to see light: of us, little by little, shall the saying be verified, ‘He shall drink of the brook in the way—therefore shall he lift up his head.’

III.

*UNITY AND INDIVIDUALITY—  
THE CHURCH AND THE  
CHRISTIAN.*



### III.

#### *UNITY AND INDIVIDUALITY— THE CHURCH AND THE CHRISTIAN.*

JOHN XVII. 2, 11, 24.

*(Authorized.)*

As thou hast giuen him power ouer all flesh, that he should giue eternall life to as many as thou hast giuen him....

Holy Father, keep through thine owne Name, those whom thou hast giuen mee, that they may bee one, as we are....

Father, I will that they also whom thou hast giuen me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.

*(Revised.)*

Even as thou gavest him authority over all flesh, that whatsoever thou hast given him, to them he should give eternal life...Holy Father, keep them in thy name which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we *are*...Father, that which thou hast given me, I will that, where I am, they also may be with me; that they may behold my glory.

THIS august, this solemn, this indeed awful chapter seems to have for its keynote that monitory voice of Horeb, 'Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place where thou standest is holy

ground.' It is told of a dying Christian pastor, that before his departure he caused this 17th chapter of St John to be read to him three times, as a portion of Scripture peculiarly dear to him, though he had never ventured to preach upon it—declaring that he did not comprehend it, and that its full understanding transcended the measure of faith which the Lord was wont to dispense to His people during their pilgrimage. I know few acts of the Ministry more trying than the being called to read this 17th chapter of St John in the congregation: that utterance of the Divine Son in the ear of the Divine Father, in the same night in which He was betrayed, does seem indeed too mysterious, too sacred, for a man (even by the mere reading) to utter.

How much more might we have shrunk from taking any of its verses as the text of a Sermon! No slight consideration would have induced me to place this among the select subjects of this brief course. But I feel that no chapter is more vital to the work here in hand—the comparison of two Versions, the Authorized and the Revised, of the New Testament of our Lord and Saviour—none in which the gain or the loss, of changes of reading and changes of rendering, can be shown more



conspicuously, or estimated with a more anxious and sensitive appreciation. This alone would not have outweighed with me the pain of the enterprise. But I am firm in the hope that God will use the study of this most inspired of all His inspirations to the edifying, here and now, of some of His people.

I have read three brief sentences, one from each of the three parts of the great Prayer—two of them involving a change of reading, all the three presenting a noticeable change of rendering. They are three, if I might so express it, of the most offensive, most aggressive, of all the alterations—the most loudly impugned, the most disdainfully scouted—and yet, shall I dare to say it? I do not despair of making you enamoured of them before this brief meditation closes.

Of the scene and setting of the great Prayer I have nothing new to tell you. Whether it was uttered in the guest-chamber—the closing words of the 14th chapter, ‘Arise, let us go hence,’ having been only a preparation for the setting forth for Gethsemane—or whether it was uttered in the very courts of the Temple, opened, it is said, at midnight during the Passover season to Israelite worshippers—or whether it was uttered in the

open air, at some halting-point of the walk to Olivet—must be left in the ambiguity which has ever beset the question, devout hearts being at liberty to choose for themselves the most probable locality or (to their feeling) the most appropriate.

Unbelievers mockingly ask us, Who was the reporter or the recorder of an utterance so profound and so prolonged as this prayer? Where were the tablets, whose was the pen of the ready writer, for such an effort of intelligence and of providence? Christians are contented with that reply which is furnished by the discourse itself of which this prayer is the peroration, ‘But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.’

The Prayer itself is variously known in the Church as the Sacerdotal or the Mediatorial Prayer of her Lord. We have spoken of the earthly scene of it: the heavenly scene of it is laid beyond death and the grave. In it the Saviour speaks of the life of time as ended—the work done, the obedience, even unto death, perfected—He is knocking at the gates of glory, and bidding them

lift their heads that the King of glory may enter.

Superficial critics complain of the introduction, throughout the Revised Version of the Prayer, of the preterite tense for the perfect. Following the Greek, step by step, and varying with its variations, we read, 'I glorified Thee on the earth,' for, 'I have glorified'—'I manifested Thy name,' for, 'I have manifested'—'they received, and knew,' for, 'they have received, and have known'—'they believed,' for, 'they have believed,' 'that thou didst send me.' It is thus that the delicate and sensitive Greek—and I see not why the less versatile English may not try to reproduce it—expresses the retrospective character of the whole utterance: earth is ended now, for the Saviour—from the gates of glory He looks back upon a finished work, and can sum it all up into one fact accomplished.

Reverently listening for each period and pause of the supplication as it gradually unfolds itself, we mark, on the whole, three great subjects. In the first five verses the Son pleads for Himself. In the next fourteen verses the Son pleads for the Eleven. In the remaining seven verses the Son pleads for the Church.

The watchword of the first section is 'glorify.'

‘I glorified Thee on the earth’—‘now glorify Thou me’—‘that the Son may glorify Thee.’ ‘Glory,’ by definition, is the forthshining of light: spiritually it is the manifestation of excellence. The Son has shown forth upon earth what the Father is, in the beauty of His fourfold perfections, of wisdom and holiness, of power and love. Now let the Father, by the miracles of Resurrection and Ascension, show forth before men and Angels who and what He is whom earth has rejected and crucified. Then shall the Son, risen and ascended, show forth, through the long ages of a Church militant and buffeted, what the Father Himself is in the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, as the light of dwellers in darkness, and the life, even from the dead, of them that believe.

The second section of the Prayer is devoted to intercession for the Eleven—the 13th chapter tells us that they were twelve no longer. The watch-words of this second section are many—‘name’ and ‘word,’ ‘truth’ and ‘knowledge,’ ‘the world’ and ‘evil,’ ‘keeping’ and ‘sanctifying.’ The great Name has been revealed to them—what God is, has been disclosed—the ‘word,’ which is the message from God to His world, has been spoken and has

been accepted—‘truth,’ which is reality, the very thing that is, has been communicated and has been made vital—‘while I was with them, I kept them’—now keep Thou, sanctify Thou, take them not out of the world, but keep them from its evil—‘for their sakes I sanctify myself,’ for their sakes I dedicate, I devote, I consecrate, life in life, life unto death, ‘that they also may be sanctified,’ may be consecrated, may be made God’s only and wholly, in the service of the life and in the sacrifice of the death, not in name only, but in deed and in truth.

The third section of the Prayer takes a wider range and compass. It looks forth from the guest-chamber or the temple or the brook-side, into the future, the near and the far-off future, of a Church bought with blood, and a world to which that Church bears its testimony. The keynote of the third section is the word ‘one.’ ‘That they may be one, even as we are one’—‘that they may be perfected into one’—‘that so the world,’ taking note of that unity, not of form or of speech, but of spirit and Divine communion, ‘may believe that Thou didst send me.’

My brethren, we cannot read the Divine Prayer quite with the eyes of those who see in it a rigid line of demarcation between Church and world,

between a saved and a lost mankind, between a few officially witnessing and the many indifferently listening or from afar admiring the spectacle—and are contented there to leave it. He who was to pray for His murderers the next day, ‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,’ certainly does not say here, in a spirit of complacent exclusiveness, ‘I pray not for the world.’ He could not indeed urge for the world the plea that He could urge for the Eleven: He could not pray for the world which was about to crucify, on the plea of its having accepted Him: He could not ever pray for a world resolved to live and die in its sins, that it might be admitted, whole and as it was, to the vision of His heavenly glory. But is not this He who said, ‘God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son?’ Is not this He who said, ‘The bread which I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world?’

No, we cannot talk, in this cold and measured way, of the words or of the purposes of Him who taketh away the sins of the world. In ever-widening circles of influence, His word spreads and is glorified—there is doubtless some secret of grace just out of sight, in which the words of this

very Prayer shall find their latest accomplishment, 'That the world may believe that Thou didst send me'—'That the world may know that Thou didst send me, and lovedst them,' the believers of all time, 'even as Thou lovedst me.' To 'believe' is ever a word of gracious import: to 'know' is the very word used of the Eleven: 'they knew, of a truth, that I came forth from Thee, and they believed that Thou didst send me.'

But now it is time that I should fix all your attention for a few moments on the alternative forms of the three sayings which I have made the text.

1. In the first of these there is no alteration of reading. The Greek text has unquestionably the singular neuter and the masculine plural combined in the manner represented by the Revised Version. 'That whatsoever (all that thing which) Thou hast given Him, to them He should give eternal life.' Every one admits that there is a difficulty in reproducing this in English. Not more of harshness than there is in the Greek—but still a harshness. The fastidious ear, the facile tongue, the superficial mind, to which all must at any cost be made smooth and level, naturally cry out against the literal translation. They like

better the Authorized Version, which sacrifices one half of the saying, to make the rhythm pleasing and the general idea transparent. Even those who are capable of construing the original profess to be actually perplexed and puzzled by the new rendering. So impatient are men of a moment's pause in their cursory survey of Divine truth. I will dare to say that the intricacy is in the thought—is in the Divine Prayer and the Divine Inspiration.

But reflect for one moment upon the mystery which the phrase points to. No less than the unity, in the individuality, of Christ's people. 'All that thing which Thou hast given Him'—there is the unity. 'To them He should give'—there is the individuality. The Church is a body. The gift of God to Christ is the gift of a humanity, of a mankind, which is not a rope of sand, and not a multitude of separate individuals, but an organized body, having cohesion, having unity, in Christ Himself. This thought, so deep and so beautiful, is absolutely sacrificed in the Authorized Version, and arrogantly scouted by the enemies of the Revised. They will retain only the other half of the saying—the individuality of the saved. The two thoughts—the body and its members, the Church and the Christian, 'the bride of the Lamb' and



the 'great multitude that no man can number'—are in the Prayer of the Lord, are in the Greek original—is it not worth something, some sacrifice (if it must be) of smoothness and commonness and pellucid transparency, to retain both in 'the tongue wherein we were born?' The Authorized Version itself has specimens of like breaches of construction. 'He that overcometh.....to him will I give power over the nations.' There we have the abrupt transition from the nominative to the dative. 'That which fell among thorns are they...that on the good ground are they.' There we have the abrupt transition from the neuter singular to the masculine plural. It is just so in both respects here. 'That, whatsoever Thou hast given Him, to them He should give eternal life.' The gift *to* the Son is seen in its unity: the gift *of* the Son is seen in its individuality. The one was in the counsels of eternity, when it pleased the Father to gather together all things in Christ. That was the gift of a multitude seen as a unit. Then in the fulness of time the purpose is to be wrought out. The Son comes forth from the bosom of the Father, to give the unspeakable gift—eternal life—the personal knowledge, as it is here defined, for enjoyment and for com-

munion, of the only true God and of Jesus Christ whom He hath sent. This giving must be individual, as the other giving was collective. Day by day, year by year, generation after generation, age after age, the Gospel call, and the soul's quickening, and the life's transformation, and the safe ingathering, must be separately wrought in the successively living individuals who make up the unit whole of the Father's gift to the Son. Lose either of these thoughts, the unity or the individuality, and you separate what God hath joined, what the Lord Himself knit together in this Intercession, what the faithful Greek has stretched and strained itself to keep united—for fear lest you should give some lolling lounging reader the trouble of a thought, or some delicate supercilious hearer the momentary jar of an unfamiliar sensation.

2. Passing to the second section of the great Prayer, and to the latter half of the 11th verse, our second text for this evening, we reach a change of reading involving of necessity a change also of rendering. The Authorized Version said, 'Holy Father, keep through Thine own Name those whom Thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are.' The change of scarcely more than one letter, supported by overwhelming authority, and, I must

add, by every consideration of probability, gives us this striking variation of rendering—‘Holy Father, keep them in Thy name which Thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are.’ ‘Thy name which Thou hast given me.’ ‘I will write upon him,’ the Philadelphian victor, ‘the name of my God...and my own new name.’ ‘Name’ has a sacred significance in Scripture. ‘Hallowed be Thy Name.’ When the Lord passed by before Moses—in answer to the prayer, ‘Show me Thy glory’—and ‘proclaimed before him the Name of the Lord,’ what was it? It was the sum of His attributes. It was the revelation of His character. It was the ‘I am that I am’ of the earlier Horeb manifestation. The Name stands for the person. It is the very use of a name—the name sets the person before the mind’s eye as that which he is.

‘The Name which Thou hast given me’ is the revelation of God in Christ. Christ came to tell us what God is. And His prayer for the Eleven is, ‘Keep them in that revelation.’ Let that telling of the Name, that Divine self-manifestation, be the enclosing wall, be the protecting fortress, within which all is safety for them, and all is peace. ‘Holy Father, keep these eleven men within

Thine own Name which Thou hast given me' for communication, to them first, then by them. Let it be to them, now that I am no more in the world, a fortress of strength, that in it they may be secure from evil, that in it they may have peace.

'That they may be one, even as we are one.' My brethren, how deep and how seasonable is the doctrine of the true unity! Men look for it in identity of forms and creeds, of opinions and expressions, of Church government and Church ritual. But the text says that it lies in a realm out of sight—in the reproduction below of that Divine oneness which unites the Son and the Father in a world where human speech and human formula is not. Spirit must be the name (if there be one) for this unity—God is Spirit, and God is Love.

3. Finally, we pass into the third section of the Prayer, and the 24th verse.

That which in the 2nd verse was the reading of the Authorized Version is here a corrected reading of the Revised. 'That which,' for, 'those whom.' Enough has been said, on the 2nd verse, upon the transition from the singular neuter to the plural masculine—upon the unity and the individuality thus brought together—and upon the form of expression by which that combination is

represented. Let us dwell, in a few last words, upon two characteristics not yet noticed.

(1) ‘Father, that which Thou hast given me, I will that, where I am, they also may be with me.’

‘Father, I will.’ Is this the same voice which shall be saying on the morrow, saying in the agony of Gethsemane, ‘Not as I will?’

Sceptics and scoffers see contradiction here, where we see nothing but harmony. Behold, they say, the Christ of the 4th Gospel—how diverse from the Christ of the Synoptics! Have they forgotten the Saviour of the 11th chapter of St John, and the Saviour of the 12th chapter? Have they forgotten the Jesus troubled in spirit, the Jesus weeping, of the one—the ‘Now is my soul troubled....Father, save me from this hour’... of the other? Do they suppose that the writer of the 17th chapter, true or false, had forgotten his 11th and his 12th? He, it is plain, saw no contradiction between the ‘I will’ and the ‘Not as I will,’ explain it as he might.

The Saviour who wills not for Himself wills for His people. For Himself, the cup which the Father hath given Him, shall He not drink it—yea, to the very dregs and the ‘Lama Sabachthani?’ For His people, for ‘all that which the Father hath

given Him,' He will say, 'I will,' yea, even to the Father. For here, as there, the two wills are one will—there, for uttermost submission to the plan laid and the necessity self-imposed—here, for the carrying out to its last great end the purpose purposed in Him before the world was.

'Father, I will that, where I am, they also may be with me.' And He speaks here, not of the Eleven, but of them also, how many soever they be, who shall believe on Him through their word. God grant that in that heart of love, on that night of sorrow, on that eve of uttermost humiliation, we also, even we, may have been comprehended—that the 'Father, I will' may have been said of us, by Him who made the worlds and 'in whom all things consist.'

(2) 'That they may behold my glory.' This is the object of that 'being with Him' of which He speaks the *Hoc volo*.

And was it then for the gratification of an ambition suppressed throughout the humiliation—was it for the reversal of that humiliation in an exaltation to a world-wide empire and an age-long sway—was it for this that the holy Saviour prayed, Let them behold my glory? The question answers itself in the asking. For what is the

glory? Is it not that 'manifestation of excellence' already spoken of, which is ever unto communication, unto assimilation, unto beatification, for those to whom it is made? St John himself tells us—'We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.' To behold the glory is to catch and to reflect it. Even upon earth, St Paul says, 'beholding,' as alone we can here behold it, in mirror and by reflexion, 'the glory of the Lord, we are changed gradually' into the same image, from glory to glory.' But how shall it be *then*? When all that is corrupt, corrupting, corruptible, has been laid aside in the 'putting off' and the 'putting on' of the great transition—when nothing *is* but the holy and the beautiful and the loving—when the world itself is lightened by God and the Lamb, and all its false and lying lights are extinguished and annihilated by that lustre 'above the brightness of the sun'—then 'they that shall be counted worthy' shall grow apace in all knowledge and in all virtue—'old things shall have passed away, and all things shall have become new.' 'That they may behold my glory' is, in other words, 'that they may behold my face in righteousness, and be satisfied, when they awake, with my likeness.'





#### IV.

*THE POSSESSION OF THE SOUL  
A PROMISE, NOT A PRECEPT.*



## IV.

### *THE POSSESSION OF THE SOUL A PROMISE, NOT A PRECEPT.*

LUKE XXI. 16—19.

*(Authorized.)*

And yee shall be betrayed both by parents and brethren, and kinsefolkes and friends, and some of you shall they cause to be put to death.

And ye shalbe hated of all men for my Names sake.

But there shall not a haire of your head perish.

In your patience possesse ye your soules.

*(Revised.)*

But ye shall be delivered up even by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolk, and friends; and *some* of you <sup>1</sup>shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. And not a hair of your head shall perish. In your patience ye shall win your <sup>2</sup>souls.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *shall they put to death.*

<sup>2</sup> Or, *lives.*

OUR Lord, sitting on the Mount of Olives over against the Temple, is here answering the enquiry of four of His disciples concerning the time and the manner of the end of the world. Their question was suggested by His prediction of the

destruction of the Temple. They could not indeed conceive of the world surviving the Temple. Judaism was to them religion—religion could never die and leave mankind living—with the fall of the Temple must come the fall of Judaism, and with the fall of Judaism must come the consummation of all things.

Such was then the confusion of thought in these men who were so soon to be transformed into the very light of the world. And our Lord did not suffer even this discourse to proceed to its close upon their postulate. He warns them that so far from Judaism as embodied in the Temple being a synonym for religion, it would be their own duty to carry religion itself, finally and for ever, forth of Jerusalem. At a given signal—the very event which would stir every feeling of patriotism into liveliest excitement—the sight of the holy City compassed with the armies of the invader—they were to make their escape from Temple and City, and flee, carrying Christ with them in their hearts, into the mountains which were to be to them the Zoar of a spiritual emancipation.

Thus much of correction is given to their error—but in other respects the double question, ‘When shall these things (namely, the destruction of

Jerusalem) be?’ and ‘What shall be the sign of Thy coming and of the end of the world?’ is answered as one. All attempts to cut the discourse into two parts—before the ‘Immediately after the tribulation of those days’ of St Matthew, and the corresponding point in the reports of the prophecy by St Mark and St Luke—are positively condemned by the closing words of all, ‘Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.’ That generation did see the destruction of Jerusalem—that generation did not see the end of the world. History is the interpreter of prophecy, and history has interpreted this prophecy as still, even for us, in its highest sense unfulfilled.

It was no part of the mission of the Eternal Son to declare to any one generation, not even to the first, that they would not live to the Advent. Each successive generation, even the first, was to live in the expectation of it. That the end of Judaism and the end of the world were not to be the same event, was more than it lay in the commission of the Saviour to reveal. And so stupendous, so awful, a catastrophe was to be the destruction of Jerusalem, that the very language descriptive of the one greater catastrophe still, was scarcely

hyperbolical as a representation of it. Sometimes the one catastrophe, and sometimes the other, rises to the surface of the prophecy : but just when we seem to have passed definitely from the one into the other, we are arrested again by a verse which evidently belongs to the one from which we are imagining ourselves to have departed. Thus the whole discourse is descriptive of the two subjects—the fall of Jerusalem, and the second coming of Christ. The same general language suits both—when the first came to pass, it turned into a type and so into a renewed prophecy of the last.

It is thus through the two Volumes of the Bible. Every prediction of temporal judgment, temporal judgment upon a particular nation or community, is so worded as to be predictive, under that first meaning, of God's later and latest judgment upon the world of mankind. The prophet Joel predicts a terrific plague of locusts, and we read him still, on the first day of Lent, as speaking to the universal Church of Christ and summoning it to repentance and reformation. St Paul predicts the coming of a Man of Sin upon whom the lightning of Christ's own Presence shall fall suddenly and decisively for his ruin—yet he says that the mystery is already working, and implies

that they to whom he writes have cause to beware of it. Our Lord, in like manner, invests the nearer destruction of the City and Temple with figures of speech suitable only, in their literalness, to the more remote consummation (as *we* know it to be) of the world itself. The fulfilment of the minor prophecy becomes itself a new prediction of the greater and more exhaustive sense beyond.

The four verses which are our text to-night are fully capable of both applications. Still the first disciples occupy the foreground of the picture. And it is not till we reach the last (the 19th) verse that we are on the perfectly level footing of an equal appropriateness to all.

We are prosecuting a comparison, in the form of specimens, between two Versions of the New Testament, the Authorized and the Revised. And though we seek, all through, edifying and not criticism, we will not lose sight anywhere of the direct though subordinate object.

The four verses present one great alteration and several smaller ones. The great alteration is our subject this evening. But, in passing towards it, let us notice one or two of the less conspicuous. Nothing is unimportant which touches Scripture. Even the connecting particles of Scripture are

instructive. Some day it will be felt that there has been a cause, and a sufficient cause, for many small changes which at first sight have seemed unnecessary if not capricious. We have sometimes made one of the 'fors' of Scripture a Sermon. 'When they looked, the stone was rolled away—for it was very great.' We called it an argument from difficulty—the very 'impossibility with man' was a plea, a guarantee almost, for the interposition of God. We will not be ashamed, this evening, to dwell for a moment on an 'and' and a 'but.' In the first verse of the text, the Authorized Version reads, 'And ye shall be betrayed.' Yet the Greek and the context must alike plead for the 'but' of the Revised. 'I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to withstand or to gainsay. *But,*' though thus fortified, you shall not escape suffering. I will give you this and this to help you—'but (for all that) ye shall be delivered up.' Again in the 3rd verse of the text (the 18th of the chapter) there is a like interchange of 'and' and 'but'—only it is the other way. The Authorized Version, led away by a superficial plausibility, reads 'But there shall not an hair of your head perish.' 'Ye shall be hated of all men—but ye shall be protected through all.' It is



the obvious, the commonplace, link of connexion. The Revised, conscientiously following the Greek, and leaving the Divine wisdom to be justified of her children, reads, '*And* not a hair of your head shall perish.' You may call it a Hebraism, but, if so it be, it is a Hebraism full of significance, bidding us look not at superficial contrasts but at Providential consistencies. 'Ye shall be delivered up...And ye shall be hated...And not a hair of your head shall perish'—thus are matters linked in heaven. We may almost say, there is no 'but' there. God recognizes not so much as the probability that one of His little ones shall perish. He sees sequence only, where men imagine contrariety. 'Ye shall be betrayed...And ye shall be hated... And ye shall be safe.'

But what a marvellous chain of paradoxes! 'Some of you shall they put to death...And not a hair of your head shall perish.' What a volume of Revelation is here! Even death is no perishing—no, not so much as of a hair of the head. How wonderfully does our Lord bid us by this saying to see the two lives in each one. The body is put to death—and not a hair of the real head is touched by it. It explains to us, and is explained by, that other saying, 'He that loseth his life for my sake

shall save it.' 'The outward man perisheth—the inward man' is safe—nay, 'is renewed day by day.' What a magnificence is here given to the soul—that life within the life, over which neither the torture nor the death of the body can so much as make 'the smell of fire pass.'

And so we arrive at the great verse of the passage, and the chief change. The Authorized Version reads, 'In your patience possess ye your souls.' It bids the imperilled Christian, fortified by promise, endure to the end, keeping his soul tranquil and trustful. A beautiful precept—yet inferior, both in reading and in rendering, but most certainly in the latter, to one other, that of the Revised Version, 'In your patience ye shall win your souls.'

For the imperative we substitute the future: for precept we substitute promise—this is one change. For 'possess' we read 'win:' for a soul given in creation we are bidden to look for a soul to be given in glory—this is the other change, and the more significant. 'The Authorized Version (it has been beautifully said) would suit men who are defending a beleaguered citadel: the Revised Version is the watchword for a conquering host.' 'Possess your souls in patience' might be addressed

to the wayworn stragglers who are escaping from a lost field. 'In your patience ye shall win your souls', is the cheering prospect opened before those whose Canaan is in front of them, and to whom 'be strong and very courageous' is the assurance of a triumphant and glorious entrance.

But the change is no matter of mere preference on grounds of taste or judgment or argument. The Greek absolutely necessitates it. The tense is one of those in which the verb before us always means 'to acquire' and never means 'to possess.' Whether the English word 'possess' ever meant 'acquire' is not absolutely certain. Such a phrase as that often repeated one of the Book of Deuteronomy, 'whither ye go over Jordan to possess it,' seems to say so. But certainly, if (like the Latin root of it) it ever had this sense, it has lost it. To possess now is, not to get, but to keep, possession. There are several places in the New Testament where 'getting' is the evident sense of the word before us. The twelve Apostles, in their trial mission, are to get themselves no gold for their purses. The traitor did not possess, he acquired or purchased, a field with the wage of his treachery. Simon of Samaria is accused by St Peter of thinking to get or purchase the gift of God with money.

The chief captain for a great sum obtained or acquired the citizenship of a Roman. In all these places the word is the one before us. Even where the meaning is not obvious, and has been lost sight of in the Authorized Version, the recovery of it is a clear gain to the sense. The boasting Pharisee in the Parable does not pay tithe upon all that he possesses, but upon all that he gets—that is, upon the daily gains of his lucrative employment. And when St Paul charges the Thessalonians to avoid sins of the flesh, he bids each one to know how, not to possess, but to get possession of, the vessel of his own body—to learn, in other words, that most difficult of all sciences, the mastery, which belongs to no man by nature, of this framework of flesh and blood, to which the Fall has given ascendancy over the spirit, and which the grace of God alone can convert into the ready and obedient servant of the renewed and regenerate soul.

This is the word, and the part of the word, which the Authorized Version in this text erroneously rendered ‘possess,’ and to which the Revised Version has unquestionably restored its true meaning, in rendering it ‘win.’ Throughout the Greek Bible, in numberless passages of the Old Testament, it stands for acquiring or purchasing. And in every

one of the seven passages where it occurs in the New Testament, it preserves its regular use.

And now we turn from a comparison of renderings to the application of the saying itself, 'In your patience ye shall win your souls.'

'Some of you shall be put to death...Ye shall be hated of all men...Not a hair of your head shall perish...In your patience ye shall win your souls.' Death itself shall not prevent this—for the soul here spoken of is the life's life, the thing which unbelief and unfaithfulness alone forfeits, the thing which is saved by faith, the thing which is acquired, gained, won, by patience.

There is a lower truth in the saying, with reference to the life of this present. Multitudes of human lives have been won by patience. The histories of battles and sieges are in large part histories of the triumph of patience. Certainly the converse is true—impatience has been defeat, has been disaster, has been shame, has been bloodshed. The analogy of earth and time gives support to the promise, when we read it, as it was spoken, of the soul and of things heavenly.

What is 'patience,' as Christ here spoke it? The Greek word for patience is made up of two parts—one meaning continuance, and the other

meaning submission : so that the combined term may be rendered 'submissive waiting'—that frame of mind which is willing to wait, as knowing whom it serves ; willing to endure, as seeing the Invisible ; recognizing the creaturely attitude of subjection to the Creator, recognizing also that filial relationship which implies a controlling hand and a loving mind in heaven.

We see then why great things should be written of patience—why it should even be made the sum of virtues—why to it, rather than to any other grace, the promise should be affixed, 'In your patience,' in the exercise, resolved and unwearied, of the grace of submissive expectancy, 'ye shall' at last 'win your souls.'

Then the soul is not won yet? Yes—and No. The soul, the true life, of each one, is already redeemed—bought, bought back, with precious blood. And the soul, the life's life, of each one, is already committed to us for watchful tending, and by us to Christ Himself for Omnipotent keeping. 'I know,' St Paul writes, 'whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to guard my deposit,' the soul which I have committed to Him, 'against that day.' This is true. Our Lord speaks not here to contradict His

own word or to vitiate His own work. Holy Scripture says indiscriminately, 'Ye were saved,' on Calvary—'ye have been saved,' in Redemption—'ye are being saved,' in the work of grace—'ye shall be saved,' in the day of glory.

Still, in fullest consistency with all these, there is room for a promise, 'Ye shall win your souls.' Let no man presume. There is a sense in which the life's life hangs suspended on that 'mark' (as St Paul calls it) which is the goal of the race. 'I count not myself to have apprehended.' There is a grace of 'submissive expectancy' still. And because there is this, there is a something yet in front of me. At present, I do not quite possess even my own soul. It often eludes me, when I would say, 'All mine own I carry with me.' There are many misgivings and doubtings in me, even as to things most surely believed. I cannot always command the life's life, when I would carry it with me to the mercy-seat. I find earth and the world, flesh and sense, oftentimes too strong for me, and too predominantly present with me, just when I would be at my best for prayer and praise. I cannot pretend to say that I have yet quite attained even to the possession of my own innermost being. 'Other lords have had dominion.' There is

‘a law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind’—how much more, against the law of my soul, which is the love of God, which is the mind and the will of Jesus Christ.

Therefore I am not at all hurt or wounded, I am entirely cheered and satisfied, by being told that I have yet actually to win my soul.

Let us lose ourselves for a moment in the contemplation of this promise. ‘Ye shall win your souls.’ And then let us see the connexion of it with the realm and region of patience. ‘In your patience ye shall win your souls.’

1. At last my soul shall be my own. That is the promise. It is the wonderful interpretation of a wonderful saying appended to the Parable of the Unrighteous Steward. ‘If ye have not been faithful in’ the use of that which was so precarious and so fugitive that even while you had it it might rather be called ‘another’s’—the possession, in less or greater measure, of the substance of this world—‘who shall give you that which is your own?’ ‘That which is your own,’ still to be won, is the ‘soul,’ the life’s life, of this text.

The soul is not my own yet. ‘All souls are mine,’ saith God. The devil disputes that, and is playing for it as his. Between these two the man



himself sits waiting. Every sin he commits goes to the devil's reckoning. Each earnest prayer, each resolute effort, each holy desire, good counsel, and just work, breathed or formed or done in faith, goes to God's reckoning and to the eventual soul-winning. While life lasts, this is the struggle. The man who believes in Jesus Christ and has given himself to Him shall rise winner. But the rising is from death—not till then is the soul adjudicated to the man.

Let not this make any hearer sad whom God hath not made sad. He is safe—in a sense he is saved—if he is Christ's. But let him not expect absolute immunity from struggle, nor even from anxiety, on this side the grave. St Paul did not. 'Lest that by any means' was still in his thoughts in the days of his most vigorous Apostleship. 'Not as though I had already attained' was written in the last group but one of his letters, when he was the prisoner of the Jews at Rome, and knew not how it would go with him.

But then—when the soul is won—what repose! what relief and refreshing! what quietness and assurance for ever! Not to have this present responsible waking, morning by morning—not to have this difficult summoning of the man that is

within me, for confession, prayer, and praise—not to have this perpetual excuse-making for duties counted impossible—not to have these evening tears and remorse for things done and undone—not to be for ever dwelling in a prison-house of peril and jeopardy—shall not this sum of negatives suffice to enable me to realize that soul-winning of which the text tells?

Yes, it is in negatives only, or almost only, that the emancipation can yet picture and foretaste itself. The positives must wait awhile for their realization: and our last word to-night must knit the promise and the condition—the final winning of the soul with the maintenance of the long patience.

2. 'In your patience ye shall win your souls.'

Patience may lack either of its ingredients. There might be a waiting which was no submission—which on the contrary was indolence, was procrastination, was dallying—the mere sitting still and letting alone and waiting upon chance—which is no grace at all, but the opposite. Or there might be a submission which was no enterprise—a waiting upon Providence, with more or less of that resignation which is the ape or shadow of patience—which had in it no doing nor daring

for Christ, no present running and fighting, and therefore no future crown.

But who shall speak the praises of the real Evangelical, Christian, spiritual patience? Who shall tell of that endurance of all miseries and all wrongs which calmly 'looks to the end' as in the hands of a Father who loves, of a Saviour who has redeemed, of a Holy Spirit who indwells? What courage is like this courage—what holiness is like this holiness—what beauty of the new nature can equal or emulate this? It is itself a prophecy of the thing prophesied—it echoes and it evidences the thing which here is written of it—the Spirit and the bride say, in response to the voice of the Lamb which was slain, 'In your patience ye shall win your souls.'



V.

*A MAN OF 'VIEWS' AND  
A RELIGION OF ABSTINENCES.*



## V.

### A MAN OF 'VIEWS' AND A RELIGION OF ABSTINENCES.

#### COLOSSIANS II. 18, 23.

(*Authorized.*)

Let no man || beguile you of your reward, † in a voluntary humilitie, and worshipping of Angels, intruding into those things which hee hath not seene, vainely pufte vp by his fleshly minde...

Which things haue in deed a shew of wisdom in will-worship and humilitie, and || neglecting of the body, not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.

|| *Or, judge against you.*

† *Gr. being a voluntary in humilitie.*

|| *Or, punishing, or not sparing.*

(*Revised.*)

Let no man rob you of your prize<sup>1</sup> by a voluntary humility and worshipping of the angels,<sup>2</sup> dwelling in the things which he hath seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind...

Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and severity to the body; *but are* not of any<sup>3</sup> value against the indulgence of the flesh.

<sup>1</sup> *Or, of his own mere will, by humility, &c.*

<sup>2</sup> *Or, taking his stand upon.*

<sup>3</sup> *Or, honour.*

THE two verses of the text are not consecutive. They refer to two subjects—two distinct lines of error. Together they present the two ingredients of a composite heresy which was threatening the

Church of Colossæ when St Paul addressed it in this wonderful letter. Wonderful we may well call it, whether we think of its depth or of its breadth, of its spirituality or of its reasoning, of its insight or of its foresight, of its grasp of truth or of its dealing with error. This is one of those letters which leave no rational doubt of their authorship. The idea of forgery or of personation is here ridiculous. Earnestness, directness, condensation, elevation, mark each line; and attest the hand of one man—one man only, through all time, capable of such a composition—not the great witness only, but himself the great evidence also, of the Gospel—once an enemy and a blasphemer, now for thirty past years a preacher and an Apostle, at this time a prisoner and a confessor, soon to be a martyr for the faith which once he destroyed.

From his Roman prison he looks abroad upon his Churches in Europe and Asia, hears tidings of each from correspondents and visitors, bears each upon his heart in prayers without ceasing, deals with each in words of inspired admonition which the Providence of God has never let die.

The condition of this remote Phrygian community—of these three Churches of the Lycus valley—was at this time full of anxiety. By some



means not fully explained, under influences of which we can but faintly trace the origin, they had fallen into habits both of thought and practice most alien to those which had been taught them by the Gospel. On the one hand, there had crept into the Christian doctrine a whole theology of speculation. They had listened to that teaching, so manifold yet so constant, which bids men seek out some intermediate mediation between the soul and God—some system of intervening saints or Angels, which shall bridge over the great chasm between sinful man and the holy God, making the contrast somewhat less awful between the created and the Creator, between the fallen and the sinless. This is that to which the former text points. On the other hand, and in combination with this, they had been taught that matter itself has sin in it; that the very contact with the material universe is defilement, and that to minimize this contact by a rigid asceticism is the first duty, the only salvation, of a being sojourning for a time in this body. Availing themselves of the Mosaic law in its external and ritual observances, yet adding largely to it in the form of a more than Rabbinical ceremonialism, they hoped to bring the flesh under the dominion of the spirit, and thus to render

themselves meet, by their industrious self-mortifications, for the final inheritance of the saints in light.

With this specious and ingenious double system, of speculation and of asceticism, St Paul enters in this Epistle into hand-to-hand conflict<sup>1</sup>. He lays deep the foundation of both arguments in the doctrine of the Eternal Son, Divine first, then Incarnate, and shows how in Him resides, absolutely and permanently, all the fulness of the Godhead. To have Him, to be in Him, to have died and risen with Him, to have the very life hidden in Him, is to be complete, is to be safe, is to be independent of all besides, is to be united to God Himself without any other mediator or intercessor. To know that He, the Redeemer by the blood of His Cross, is also the Maker and Upholder of the world and all things therein—that by Him were all things created, and in Him all things consist—is the consecration of matter itself to the thankful and confident use of them that are His, the confutation of every notion of defilement from a Cosmos of sense, and the condemnation of every rule, so far as religion is concerned, of the 'Touch not, taste not, and handle not.'

<sup>1</sup> See Bishop Lightfoot on the Colossians, Introduction, chapters II. and III.

From this brief account of the general subjects of the Epistle we pass to the particular topics of the two texts. In each of the two we notice a direct conflict between the Authorized Version and the Revised. Where the one describes the false teacher as 'intruding into those things which he hath not seen,' the other speaks of him as 'dwelling in, or taking his stand upon, the things which he hath seen.' And whereas, in the other text, the Authorized Version represents the ascetic practices which are under discussion as 'not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh,' the Revised Version, on the contrary, says that they are 'not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh.' These are our two topics for this evening, and each of them will be found to carry us into a deeply-interesting and instructive field of thought.

1. The first change is a matter of reading. It turns upon the presence or absence, in the Greek text, of a small negative particle. 'Intruding into those things which he hath not seen' is a charge of presumption. These speculations about the invisible world, these new doctrines of intermediate agents and agencies between man and God, this multiplication of intercessors rendered necessary by the distance which separates the material universe,

and man in flesh and blood as a part of it, from the high and holy One that inhabiteth eternity, are denounced by St Paul, according to the received text, as so many presumptuous intrusions into a region which lies out of the sight of the speculator. Does this strike you as a consistent argument, as a natural line of thought, for one whose whole life was concentrated upon objects out of sight? Would St Paul be likely to blame a writer or preacher on Divine truth, for not keeping within the confines of things seen? Would he regard it as a mark of soundness or soberness, to echo the language of the materialist of this or of any day, 'I believe nothing that I do not see?' In short, would a man who states this as the characteristic of all Christians, 'We walk by faith, not by sight,' count it any answer whatever to a professed revelation, to say, 'You are intruding into that which you have not seen, and which therefore you cannot possibly know?' Would not the retort be ready and crushing, 'No man hath seen God at any time—true or untrue, the thing that is said of Him cannot ground itself on sight?'

This which would have struck any reader of the sentence, knowing who wrote it, as an insuperable difficulty, is altogether rolled out of the way

by the preponderating authority for the omission of the negative with the Revised Version, and, as a necessary consequence, the absolute inversion of St Paul's argument against the Colossian heretic. The word formerly rendered 'intruding into' must now take one of its other recognized meanings. The Greek verb before us is used in various senses. Two of these are, 'to dwell in,' and 'to stand upon.' The combined phrase will then be, 'dwelling in the things which he hath seen,' or 'taking his stand upon things which he hath seen'—and the charge will become not that of an unauthorized and presumptuous intrusion, but rather that of a self-complacent self-conceit. This man says he has 'seen' things. It is the very expression with which we are all familiar in the speech and writing of the present day. A man has 'views.' He sees this and that—or thinks so. Very obscure writers and thinkers are fond of the phrase. The Colossian speculator seems to have anticipated them. 'He dwells in things that he has seen.' He may have had 'visions'—the word will bear that sense here—he may have represented himself as privileged to see visions and revelations of the Lord—to have come back from the third heaven with permission or commission to reveal

to his inferiors the great sights which have there been disclosed to him. Or, without claiming quite such exceptional manifestations as these, he may declare that he has 'seen' things—in the tone of a confident and arrogant thinker, who gives to his own notions and conceptions the style and title of certainties verified by the eye of the mind. 'Dwelling in things which he has seen,' with a complacent self-satisfaction—dwelling in them as the sum and substance, the limit and terminus, of truth and the whole of truth—how forcibly does St Paul thus set the man before us as the embodiment of all that is speculative and mystical—or, if we prefer the marginal rendering, 'taking his stand upon his views,' regarding them as land which he has won with the bow and spear of his intellect, and from which he can go on to move or conquer the universe, we feel that St Paul has more than half answered him by the very delineation, he has gone far to counterwork his machinations by the mere description of the temper and tone of the man.

This is no question of liking or disliking an alteration made by the Revised Version in the familiar look and sound of the Authorized. A necessity is laid upon us, by the exercise of a simple judgment upon evidence, to part with this 'not.'

And are we losers by it? When it is pondered, does not the change recommend itself? 'Dwelling in or upon, standing or taking his stand upon, things which he has seen,' whether his views or his visions, seems very suitable to the subject of St Paul's comment: he does not accuse the man of not having seen with the bodily eye things which by their very nature lie out of its ken—he does not accuse him of presumption in seeing with the mind things which he could not, by the nature of the case, see with the body: what he does accuse him of is a contented and conceited settling down in his own fancies as if because he dreamed them they must be true—as if he were the seer, and therefore the oracle, of the world of heaven, privileged to know, and commissioned to tell, things of which commoner eyes and tongues are incapable.

'Vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.' These new thinkers spoke much of the mind—made knowledge the lure and bait of their enticements—would establish a sort of aristocracy of intellect within that Christian society which was meant to be free to all comers, and in which, by the terms of its foundation, the wise and prudent of this world are set side by side with babes. The man of 'views' is a man of 'mind,' and claims, as such,

an insight denied to the multitude. How striking is St Paul's combination—'idly inflated by the mind of his flesh.' You talk of 'mind' as the engine of your discoveries—let me tell you, it is the mind of flesh, not of spirit; it has its moving power in the very sphere which you repudiate—the lower nature by which you are tied and bound to matter, not the spiritual part which alone can really wing its way into the realm of heaven and of God. The man of views, the man whose thought is (in his own idea) as good as sight, for its certainty and its clearness, is exercising what he calls his mind, but it is a mind of flesh, not of spirit, and it idly puffs up the thinker who imagines himself edified.

To how much of the 'thought' (so called) of a later generation St Paul, if he were amongst us, would apply the same disparaging sentence, it is needless and profitless for us to enquire. That he would so describe all that secretly or openly sets aside Christ in any of His offices towards the Christian, or towards the Church, or towards the world, we know from all his writings—from none more certainly than from this Epistle. We have here that hint given us, if it be no more, of Christ as the creating, upholding, containing Person to the universe as well of matter as of spirit, which would do



more than all the arguments of all the theologians to reconcile religion with science, consecrating all the energies of the latter to the service of the former, because making this the very axiom and postulate of all science, that never in its highest soarings, never in its deepest diggings, never in its broadest and widest flights, can it get outside of Him in whom all things consist, in whom the discoverer himself, with his will or without it, must still live and move and have his being.

2. We pass to the other text, and to an alteration not now of reading but of rendering. In doing so, we turn from the speculative to the practical side of the new heresy at Colossæ. We have seen how the dreamers of that period dealt with spiritual and Divine relations—how they multiplied intercessions and mediations between God and the soul, by way of filling up the gulf fixed between a spirit encased in matter and a Deity who is inaccessible to contact with sense. We have now to see them in their treatment of matter itself; how they sought, by ceremonial prohibitions, ‘Touch not, taste not, handle not,’ to counteract the deadly influence of sense upon spirit, and to mortify the body itself as the natural foe of spirituality and devotion.

It was a plausible and perhaps in its origin a well-intentioned effort. This was a mode of dealing with matter, incomparably nobler and more moral than that which represented it as simply contemptible and of no moment. The two perversions grew out of one root: asceticism and licence both rob the body of its proper dignity as not only the vestment but also the instrument of the spirit, essential, it should seem, in some form, to its activity and its efficiency. St Paul has to strike at that one root of the two growths, and he does it by introducing a new conception of the very nature and principle of the Christian life itself.

But in the verse before us it is not licence but asceticism which he has directly in view. And speaking of those rules of abstinence by which the ascetic seeks to bind the freedom of the disciple, St Paul admits, first of all, in this verse, that they 'have indeed a show of wisdom'—they speak plausibly and promise largely, by their 'will-worship,' their making a religion of self-imposed observances—by their 'humility,' their obsequiousness in bowing themselves to the direction and dictation of men—by their 'severity to the body,' their unsparing imposition upon it of a yoke of mortifying restrictions—thus far the two Versions,

the Revised and the Authorized, are substantially agreed and at one.

In the remaining clause there is not divergence only, there is conflict. The Authorized Version says, 'not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.' The meaning, we may suppose, is, 'not doing any honour to the body as to the satisfying of the real demands of the flesh.' The flesh itself has lawful as well as sinful desires: these ought to be satisfied; and any system which denies to these their proper satisfaction is in fact denying to the body that honour which, as God's handywork, is its due.

It would be impossible in this place to argue the objections to this rendering on the ground of the syntax of the sentence. It does in reality leave absolutely unrecognized a particle in the first clause of the verse, which demands a contrast and antithesis in the last. But, even without this consideration, is it in accordance with St Paul's teaching, to blame a system of abstinence for not 'satisfying the flesh?' Indeed, the word rendered 'satisfying' is very far more than that in the Greek—it means, filling to the full, it means glutting and satiating, it means, as the Revised Version gives it, 'indulgence'—and would St Paul find fault with asceticism on the ground that it prohibited the indulgence of the flesh?

Let us set over against this rendering that of the Revised Version. It has ventured to interpret the general bearing of the clause by the insertion of a particle of antithesis—'*but* are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh.' The language is borrowed from the profession of medicine—what is good for—in other words, what is a valuable remedy for—such or such a disease<sup>1</sup>. Here the disease is the indulgence of the flesh—and the question is, how far asceticism is a suitable medicine for it. St Paul says that it is of no real value as a prescription for that scourge of humanity. It sounds well, it looks well, it professes loudly; but it has no real value in confronting and coping with it.

'I speak as to wise men'—have we not here light out of darkness? Have we not, in this new rendering, the real elucidation of an obscure text of Scripture? Rules of abstinence from particular meats and drinks at all times or at certain times—regulations as to the kind of food, solid or liquid, of which it is lawful to partake, from which it is an act of religion to abstain—have, St Paul says, a show of wisdom; they point to a terrible evil, and they profess to cure it; they use well-sounding words, such as temperance and godli-

<sup>1</sup> See Bishop Lightfoot's note on the passage.

ness; they talk of submission to those who know, of the value of humility in bending the neck to discipline, of the dignity of being lords of the body, making it serve, never letting it rule—and St Paul does not deny that the object is good and high, that the means are plausible and have much to be said for them. But he declares this—as a man of long and wide experience, as a man who has tried all means, above all, as a man taught of God—that all such regulations will fall short of the mark, which is the control of the appetites of the body, the counteraction of the indulgence of the flesh. They have indeed a show of wisdom, but they have no real value in the effectual curbing of the unruly and riotous flesh.

The sentence is embedded in other sentences, which tell what St Paul counted valuable for this attainment of the mastery of the body. In no passage of his writings does he rise to a higher level of Christian thought and doctrine. As in Jesus Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom, so that they who hold not fast the Head, whatever they may think or see or dream, can but be puffed up, cannot be edified—which was the thought of the first text; so in living the higher life, the life hid with Christ in God, the life of union with a Saviour once dying for sin, now risen and glorified, can alone

be found the secret of that victory over the flesh which is the professed object of all those who have any system of ethics to propound for the acceptance of mankind. If ye died with Christ, why, as though your life were still in a Cosmos of matter, do ye submit to be put under precepts of a 'Touch not, taste not, handle not,' at the dictation of a feeble and nugatory asceticism? If ye were raised with Christ, seek the things above, think the things above, live the things above, where Christ is—and the chains of sense and flesh shall fall off, of themselves, or by the influence of the Spirit of life, from your hands.

For what is your life? It is, the being so united to a Saviour in heaven, that where He is ye are, and what has happened to Him has happened also to you, death and burial, resurrection and ascension: the veil which hides Him from view hides also from view your own real life: not till the veil is taken away shall ye quite see Him as He is: not till the veil is taken away shall ye also, to your own astonishment as to that of the world, be manifested with Him in glory.

Such is the life to which St Paul invites each one who hears his words this evening. 'The Spirit and the bride say, Come—let him that heareth say, Come.'

VI.

*THE HUMILIATION  
AND EXALTATION OF CHRIST.*





## VI.

### THE HUMILIATION AND EXALTATION OF CHRIST.

#### PHILIPPIANS II. 5—10.

(*Authorized.*)

Let this minde bee in you,  
which was also in Christ Iesus :

Who being in the forme of  
God, thought it not robbery to  
bee equall with God :

But made himselfe of no re-  
putation, and tooke vpon him  
the forme of a seruant, and was  
made in the || likenesse of men.

And being found in fashion  
as a man, he humbled himselfe,  
and became obedient vnto death,  
euen the death of the Crosse.

Wherefore God also hath highly  
exalted him, and giuen him a  
Name which is aboue euery  
name:

That at the Name of Iesus  
euery knee should bow.

|| *Or, habite.*

(*Revised.*)

Have this mind in you, which  
was also in Christ Jesus : who,  
<sup>1</sup>being in the form of God, count-  
ed it not <sup>2</sup>a prize to be on an  
equality with God, but emptied  
himself, taking the form of a  
<sup>3</sup>servant, <sup>4</sup>being made in the like-  
ness of men ; and being found  
in fashion as a man, he humbled  
himself, becoming obedient *even*  
unto death, yea, the death of the  
cross. Wherefore also God highly  
exalted him, and gave unto him  
the name which is above every  
name ; that in the name of Jesus  
every knee should bow.

<sup>1</sup> Gr. *being originally.*

<sup>2</sup> Gr. *a thing to be grasped.*

<sup>3</sup> Gr. *bondservant.*

<sup>4</sup> Gr. *becoming in.*

FOUR letters are preserved to us of St Paul's  
first captivity. They form the third of the four  
groups of Epistles by which, being dead, he yet  
speaks to us. Each group has characteristic

features, decisive as to the chronology of his life. Each group adds much to our knowledge of him : the loss of any one group would leave that knowledge less complete and less vivid. There is no group which would be more missed than this third—containing the three contemporaneous letters, to the Ephesians, to the Colossians, and to Philemon, and the Epistle now open before us, written probably at a different time in the two years' imprisonment—whether before or after the other three, there is nothing positive to show.

When St Paul wrote this letter, the result of his trial was still uncertain. His own wishes about it are divided : to depart and be with Christ would be far better for him—that he should stay on in the body would be better for his Churches : on the whole, he is confident that there is still life and work before him, and that he will be again at Philippi, as at other centres of his activity, shortly.

Meanwhile, amidst abounding causes of comfort and thankfulness, he seems to have had one single anxiety about this loved and favoured community. Some small dissensions he hears of amongst them ; and he urges with an almost passionate earnestness, as the true secret of unity, the twin graces of humility and unselfishness. As the perfect example,

and the one motive, of both, he sets before them the mind that was in Christ Jesus when for our sake He laid aside His Divine glory, took upon Him the form of a servant, and in that nature stooped even to the death of the Cross.

This great passage, the Epistle for the Sunday of Passion Week, lies before us this evening in two forms, presenting two chief divergences and several minor differences.

‘Let this mind be in you,’ or, according to a slightly altered reading, ‘have this mind in you,’ ‘which was also in Christ Jesus.’ The mind spoken of is the mind of humility, and the mind of unselfishness. We should expect then that the illustration of that mind, by the one great and glorious example, would place in the forefront, not the self-assertion, but the self-abnegation, of the Saviour. In this expectation the Authorized Version disappoints us. ‘Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.’ He was in the form of God, and He counted that equality with God no robbery. True—most true: but to what purpose is the mention here of this consciousness of a right? St Paul is saying, ‘Have the mind of Christ Jesus for your mind’—and if he should dwell here upon Christ’s own sense of His

right to Godhead, it would almost seem to encourage in us a standing upon our rights rather than the foregoing of them. At all events, it would lay the stress upon just that conscious stepping down which is, for us, a spurious kind of humility—a self-assertion in the very act of the self-denying.

Let no one suppose that doctrine is jeopardied if we read the clause differently. When we start with the words, 'being in the form of God'—when, with the margin of the Revised Version, we add, that 'being' is, in the Greek, 'being originally'—the Divinity of our Lord is made the starting-point of the whole revelation, and cannot be imperilled by the subsequent question, whether or no the following clause declares an assertion by Himself that He thought it no robbery, no presumptuous claim, to have that equality of being which is His Divinity. The Authorized Version takes the one view, the Revised Version the other. The Revised Version regards the clause as the resolution of the self-humiliation. 'Being (originally) in the form of God,' possessing, in other words, from eternity, those inherent and characteristic attributes which make up the very idea of God, He 'counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God,' but, on the

contrary, for our sakes, divested Himself of His proper glory, by assuming the form of a servant.

The proposed change is no novelty. It is said to be the common and indeed almost universal interpretation of the Greek fathers. Though not, in its precise form, a common phrase in the Greek, it has sufficient authority to make it no conjecture<sup>1</sup>. The original idea is that of 'a thing for seizing and grasping'—a thing to be caught at and clung to—a thing which is to be treated as a fortunate or precious possession, from which nothing must be allowed to divert or divorce you. Thus the statement of St Paul is, that the eternal Son, of one substance and nature with the Father, possessing all His attributes, of holiness, wisdom, and power, dwelling in the light unapproachable, and altogether distinct and separate from the created universe, the work of His own hands, yet, in forming the resolution to seek and to save that which was lost, 'counted not this equality of being with God a thing to be prized' in comparison with the mighty sacrifice of which it was the alternative, but took the great step which brought Him into the Cosmos by incorporation, though it cost Him the present exercise of the prerogatives of Deity, the present

<sup>1</sup> See Bishop Lightfoot on the passage.

enjoyment of that bliss and that glory which He had with the Father before the world was.

To argue the question further would be unsuitable to this place. Otherwise I should call attention to one peculiarity in the original, which seems to be decisive of it. The tense of the word 'counted' is that tense which expresses a single act, not a continuous action. Thus it suits in this context the formation of a new resolution, it does not suit the habitual exercise of a certain state of mind. Taking upon Him to deliver man, He decided not to cling to the equality of being which was His with God—He resolved to cast this aside, as a glory not to be weighed in the scales with the meditated humiliation.

Is any one saying in his heart, 'Here is another text gone which proved the Divinity of Jesus Christ? We have lost the "God was manifest" of the first Epistle to Timothy—now we are to lose the "thought it not robbery" of the Epistle to the Philippians. These men are indifferent to the great verity on which the sinner's hope hangs, the very virtue and life of the Atonement itself?' 'Let such an one think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's'—let him ask himself, Is not the clause left unaltered here,

‘being in the form of God’? Let him ask himself, Could He count equality with God a thing not to be clung to, if He did not first possess it? Brethren, the Divinity of our Lord is not a doctrine lying loose by itself upon the surface of Scripture, dependent upon a few isolated texts to prove or to prop it—it is interwoven with the whole fabric and texture of the Bible, and the very alterations which may here and there rob you of a phrase or a clause which in so many words assert it, do, when closely looked into, rather turn to it for a testimony, the more cogent in proportion as it may be more subtle, the more irrefragable just because more manifestly undesigned.

The humiliation of Christ begins then from the very beginning of the passage. Being in the form of God, He took the resolution of not counting it a thing to be clung to, thus to possess an equality of being with God. Instead of clinging to that which of right was His, He ‘made Himself (the Authorized Version says) of no reputation:’ He ‘emptied Himself,’ the literal Greek expression, has been ventured upon by the Revised.

We have here before us the unfathomable yet most real mystery of the Incarnation. The Eternal Son could not cease to be God. Even upon earth,

St John's Gospel says, He was still in heaven. 'No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven.' He could not 'make Himself empty' of the Divine essence, but He could (with reverence must the incomprehensible word be spoken) divest Himself of the present exercise of the attributes of Deity, and become in all things like unto those whom He came to save—acting, as it were, within the precincts of a human soul, indwelt and inwrought, without measure and without interruption, by the Holy Ghost.

We state the mystery, and we leave it : it is for pondering, not for discussion.

It is but in passing that we just notice the looseness of the Authorized Version and the closeness of the Revised, in the linking together of the clauses. The Authorized Version says, 'made Himself of no reputation...and took upon Him the form of a servant...and was made in the likeness of men.' This suggests to a thoughtful reader the idea of three separate and consecutive actions. The Revised Version following the Greek says, 'taking the form ...being made...' As if it were, The 'self-emptying' spoken of was effected by taking..., in other words, by being made... Not three acts, but one act, did all.



In taking the 'form,' that is, the inherent and characteristic attributes, of a bondman, that is, of a creature, of the God with whom He was one—in other words, in 'being made,' or rather, in 'coming into being,' in a new state, even in the likeness of us men—thus did He, who was from the beginning in the 'form' of God, divest Himself of that equality of being with God which was His from eternity—thus did He empty Himself, for present exercise, of the inalienable rights and powers of Deity, and prepare Himself for those further humiliations which are the subject of the next stage of the inspired revelation before us.

The 8th verse begins the wondrous self-humiliation anew. And, as before He who was in the form of God made Himself empty by taking the form of a creature and being born in the likeness of men; so now, He who is by this time 'found in fashion as a man,' humbles Himself lower still—carries His obedience far beyond the mere taking of our nature, at best the nature of a servant—stops not on the higher steps of the ladder of humanity—say a position of wealth or honour or indulgence—but descends to the very lowest and meanest of all—stoops to death, the doom of the fallen—and not to death only, say the death of a calm and

honoured and lamented dissolution, but to a death kept for the vilest, the most contemptible, the most criminal—a death of bitter shame and lingering torture, even the death of the Cross.

From the humiliation we pass by one step to the exaltation. The exaltation is no mere return into the temporarily foregone glories of the original equality of being with God. It is distinctly and definitely as the self-humbled One that He passes into the heaven which is His home. 'For the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross.' The joy was not that of having performed a task and earned a prize—the prize of repose and relief and a Paradise regained; not that of leaving behind Him below sights and sounds of misery, and the vexing of the righteous soul itself in seeing and hearing: the returning Son returns in a new character—as the God-Man, carrying up into the Divine Presence that Humanity which is as real as the Deity—even that Name which is above every name, a designation unique as the Person, a revelation, in other words, of the whole work and the whole office which He has done and which He has undertaken for those whom He died to save.

'That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow.' So speaks the Authorized Version. 'That

in the name of Jesus every knee should bow' is the rendering, true to the original, of the Revised.

It would be unreasonable to charge the Authorized Version with that poor and formal interpretation of this bowing at the name of Jesus, which has led to the bending of the head or the knee in Churches at every mention of one particular name among the many names and titles of our Lord Jesus Christ. An innocent and pleasing custom we might call it, if it did not remind us perpetually of a misleading translation and a capricious limitation. The older English Versions, those of Wiclif, Tyndale, and Cranmer, all read 'in the name of Jesus.' The Genevan Version introduced the 'at,' and the Authorized followed it. Let us say two words upon it. First, 'the name of Jesus' does not mean, on any supposition, 'the name Jesus.' That name was our Lord's human name. It was not given Him at His exaltation: it was given Him at His humiliation. It was shared by Him with other persons, both of the Old Testament and the New. The meaning of the phrase is not, in any case, 'the name Jesus,' but 'Jesus's Name.' 'Name' is here, as in other sacred places of Scripture, the sum of the attributes. It is the character, the office, the revelation, of Jesus. When it is said

here that God gave Him on His exaltation that Name which is above every name, the thought is, that God invested Him with that characteristic designation, as the Redeemer and Intercessor, the Lord and the Life, of the Church and the Christian, which is alone and solitary among the thousands and tens of thousands of human and superhuman existences. The explanation is given in one of the three sister Epistles, 'He raised Christ from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, and put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the Church which is His body.'

'That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow.' The phrase may remind us of one which was lately our subject in the Mediatorial Prayer, 'Holy Father, keep them in Thy name which Thou hast given me.' The Name there is the containing fortress of the faithful—even that revelation of the Father in the Son which is the one hope and life of the redeemed and rescued man.

'That in the name of Jesus'—within the confines and precincts of the revealed character of

Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth, and the Life—within and not without that safe sanctuary which is, being interpreted, Jesus such as He is—all worship should be offered, all allegiance paid, all devotion exercised, by the whole creation of God—every tongue joining in the great confession, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Brethren, explanation is now ended—comparison is now ended—let a last word press home the two thoughts which have chiefly occupied us in that ‘faithful saying’ on which we have dwelt.

1. What must have been, let each ask himself, that consideration which weighed with Jesus Christ to count it no prize to be equal with God?

I know that the words are dull and inexpressive, by reason of our inability to enter into thoughts so high above us as the motives and counsels of God. But He has come forth here, by His Holy Spirit, to admit us to one glimpse of His council-chamber. He has set before us by His holy Apostle the workings of the mind which was in Christ Jesus ere yet He had manifested Himself on the stage of this earth. He has even said, ‘Let this same mind be in you.’ Therefore it is no presumption to try to grasp the thing said of it. It is called a humility—it is called an unselfishness. Now we know that God does nothing for ostentation; and we

know that God does nothing simply for imitation. This humility was no mere stooping to a lower position than was the property of the Divine, for the sake of attracting admiration to the descent and the sacrifice. This unselfishness was no exhibition on the stage of the universe of a beautiful attribute of the God-like perfection. It was necessary for a purpose. It had an end. It was a work as well as a sacrifice. And if it is to act upon God's creatures as a motive, it must be by giving account of itself as a means to an end.

The point to which we are coming is that the reign of sin, as a power, and as an evil, and as a curse, and as a ruin, was so serious in the sight of God, that He Himself, in the Person of His Divine Son, formed the resolution of despising Deity itself, as to its present joys and glories, in comparison with the rescue of the fallen creature from the dominion of that hostile and hateful yoke under which it was bound. Christ counted it not a gain to be equal with God, while man was suffering and to suffer by reason of sin.

It ought to give us a very serious feeling of the condition of a creation groaning and travailing. Nothing less than St Paul's words, 'counting it no gain to have equality of being with God,' could adequately describe what Christ must have seen in

us when He formed the resolution of the self-emptying. How lightly, how complacently, how smilingly, do we carry this yoke the very sight of which brought Him down from heaven! Surely it ought to be great self-condemnation to feel that we are making it vain and nugatory that He should have thought scorn of His own Divine glory? Must it not be very terrible that we are making Him look down from heaven upon a world redeemed yet unredeemed—a world just as suffering and just as sinful as that which caused the self-sacrifice? Must it not be more dreadful still if we are mixing Him up with our sins, turning His grace into lasciviousness, by saying, We may do evil now, and not die, *because* He came down from heaven to die for us? The charge, ‘Let this mind be in you, which was in Him,’ before it speaks one word to us of humility or self-sacrifice, must begin by saying, Think of sin as He thought of it, when the very sight of a sin-ruined world made Him count it no prize to be equal with God.

2. Finally, ‘that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow.’ We bend the knee of the body at the mention of one of His Names. It is nothing. It is beside the mark altogether of the thing spoken of. Why do we not bow also at the name of Christ—at the name of the Lord—at the name of

Emmanuel, God with us? We sing beautiful hymns in praise of the name of Jesus—such hymns are multiplying in the Churches. It may be an ignorant worship, all this. The question is, Does the knee bow in the name of Jesus? Is every adoration paid, is every prayer offered, in the Name, within the Name, contained and centred in the revelation, of Jesus Christ such as God has given Him to be to the soul which is His purchase, to the Church which is His body? Are you sure, are you quite sure, that you recognize Him and that you feel towards Him as all that He indeed is? Is no part of His Name left out or slurred over in your thoughts of Him? Is He God for us, God with us, God in us, to each one? In other words, Is He our Peace by the blood of His Cross, our Divine Presence in each department of the life lived below, our Divine Life inwardly in the real comfort and strength of the Holy Spirit? ‘In the name of Jesus’—inside the revelation of Jesus—lies all hope, all comfort, all strength, all influence. In the name of Jesus let every knee bow—first in homage, then in worship. So let us prepare for the celebration of the great week of His sorrow—‘so by His Cross and Passion may we be brought to the glory of His Resurrection, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.’



VII.

*ACCESS TO THE HOLIEST BY  
THE BLOOD OF JESUS.*



## VII.

### ACCESS TO THE HOLIEST BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS.

#### HEBREWS X. 19—22.

(*Authorized.*)

Having therefore, brethren,  
|| boldnesse to enter into the  
Holiest by the blood of Iesus,

By a new and liuing way which  
hee hath || consecrated for vs,  
through the vaile, that is to  
say, His flesh :

And *having* an high Priest  
ouer the house of God :

Let vs drawe neere with a  
true heart in full assurance of  
faith, hauing our hearts sprinkled  
from an euill conscience, and our  
bodies washed with pure water.

|| *Or, libertie.*

|| *Or, new made.*

(*Revised.*)

Having therefore, brethren,  
boldness to enter into the holy  
place by the blood of Jesus, by  
the way which he dedicated for  
us, a new and living way, through  
the veil, that is to say, his flesh ;  
and *having* a great priest over  
the house of God; let us draw  
near with a true heart in <sup>1</sup>ful-  
ness of faith, having our hearts  
sprinkled from an evil <sup>2</sup>con-  
science, and our body washed  
with pure water.

<sup>1</sup> *Or, full assurance*

<sup>2</sup> *Or, conscience: and having our  
body washed with pure water, let us  
hold fast*

THIS great passage is the turning-point of a great  
Epistle. That anonymous voice from Italy—  
anonymous to us, not to them—came to its first  
readers at a critical moment. They were Jews of

Jerusalem—members of the mother Church which had had Apostles for its bishops and martyrs for its pastors—living in the daily sight and hearing of the Temple and its services—with all the associations and prepossessions of Israelites strong in them, side by side with their Christianity—and now on the very eve of that terrific overthrow of their city and people which their Lord had defined as lying within the lifetime of the generation itself to which He had ministered.

His words of direction were plain and express—‘When ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then let them which are in Judæa flee to the mountains.’ But what a strange charge to lay upon them! An awful choice was involved in it, for every Hebrew Christian, between two religions and two patriotisms—two religions both of God, and two patriotisms both duties. How anxious, as they saw the day approaching, must have been the decision for each one. What a moment was here for the pastor’s influence to guide them and to hold them to the right choice and the difficult sacrifice.

This is the key to the Epistle as a whole. Its object is to impress upon these Israelite Christians the incomparableness, the incommensurableness with aught else, of Jesus Christ. Having Him they

have all, losing Him they lose all, that was precious to them in the histories of their race and in the mysteries of their religion. All else are shadows, He is the substance. All else are types, He is the antitype. All else are prophecies, He is the fulfilment. Lord of Angels as well as of men, He is the one only Mediator between God and men, Himself God and Man, touching both, one with both, the worshipper and the Object of worship—Head over all to the Church which is His body. High above Israel's lawgiver, though *he* was the man of men in privilege and office—high above Moses, as the Son is above the servant—opening to them a rest in heaven, of which Canaan and Sabbath were alike symbols only—if they let Him go, they part with all that made type and symbol valuable—Moses wrote of Him, pointed to Him, retired and stood aside for Him. Above all, for this was the centre and focus of the religious life of Israel, Christ is the reality to which the whole Levitical system of tabernacle and priesthood and ritual witnessed—Christ is at once the one sacrifice which takes away the sins of the world, and also the one Priest who ministers not in temples made with hands but in that true sanctuary which is heaven itself.

These are the subjects of foregoing sections of the Epistle. The text is the application of them all to the circumstances and responsibilities of the readers. 'Having therefore, brethren, boldness,' freedom of heart and speech, 'for the entering of the holy place by the blood of Jesus...let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.'

The exhortation is deeply tinged with expressive colouring, drawn from the ceremonial of the day of Atonement as we find it minutely detailed in the 16th chapter of Leviticus. It is a deeply interesting study, when we bring to it the light of this Epistle, which deserves to be known and honoured in all the Churches as the very Gospel of the Old Testament. On that day of Atonement—still so sacredly kept, all over the world, by Israelites who are not yet Christians, though the celebration is shorn of all its characteristic features by that demolition of the temple, which ought to have been itself their 'schoolmaster unto Christ'—sacrifices were offered on the great brasen altar, outside the tabernacle, first by the priest for himself, then by the priest for the people; and in either case the blood of the slain victim was carried by him within the curtain which separated the outer from the inner chamber of the sanctuary, and sprinkled by

him upon the mercy-seat covering the ark, as a typical reconciliation, made year by year continually, between a holy God and a sinful people. Once only in the whole year did any human eye penetrate that innermost shrine, or rest upon the sacred emblems contained within the mysterious curtain. That was the curtain which was rent in twain, by no human hand, at the moment of the death of the Saviour—the Holy Ghost this signifying, that by that death upon the Cross the way into the true Holy of Holies, God's own Presence, was now at last opened to His sinful creatures, that they may go in and out without let or hindrance, according to their need, finding mercy for past transgression, and grace to help in time of need.

This is the imagery used in the text. You are no longer excluded from that Divine Presence which was typified by the inner shrine of the tabernacle or the temple. You may now do in reality that which only one man in each generation, and he only once in each year, was permitted to do, and that only in semblance, while the Law Dispensation lasted. Each one of you is now your own Priest, yea, your own High Priest, under Jesus Christ. You may do for yourself, every day, in spirit and in truth, that which the Israelite of old

could only do vicariously and by a representative, and, even thus, only in dark similitude. Taking in your hand—such is the figure—the blood of Jesus, as the High Priest of old carried in his hand that sacrificial blood, which was his passport into the Holy of holies—in other words, relying upon the Atonement made by Jesus Christ, as on this day, for the sins of the world—you have now, each one of you, liberty of access to God Himself in heaven, and freedom of speech also to tell Him all your secrets, whether of sin or of fear or of want, secure against repulse or upbraiding, so long as you rely not upon your own righteousness but upon His manifold and great mercies in Christ Jesus.

There is a grace and beauty in the Greek sentence, which seems scarcely to be represented by either or by any of the Versions. The arrangement is this. ‘Having freedom of speech for the entering of the Holy of holies in the blood of Jesus,’ as your passport and safeguard, ‘which (entering) He inaugurated for us as a new and living entering...let us draw near.’ The word rendered ‘way’ is also used in Greek for a ‘journey’ or act of going. It is, in fact, the simple word of which ‘entering’ is the compound. It does not express here anything different from the ‘entering.’



It does not mean that Christ consecrated a particular road for us into God's presence: what He consecrated was, the act of entering. The Greek says, You possess the right of entering—and that entering, the act of entering God's presence, is a 'new' act, new with the Gospel, and a 'living' act, to be done by the living man with all the life in him—and finally, that act of entering was made safe and made lawful for you for the first time, in its completeness and in its satisfaction, by the sacrifice on Calvary of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The figures of the day of Atonement are not yet exhausted. We have heard who the priest is, the man himself—we have heard what he carries, the blood of Jesus—we have heard what the sanctuary is, the very Presence of God. Now the Epistle tells us what the veil is, through which he enters. It is 'the flesh,' that is, the human body, of Jesus Christ. It is the Humanity of Christ which makes Him our medium of communication. 'No man hath seen God at any time—the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.' 'The Word was made flesh, and we beheld His glory.' 'Through His flesh' we pass 'into the holiest.' It is by knowing and feeling what He has done for us by taking upon

Him our flesh, and in that flesh suffering death for us upon the Cross—it is thus that we pass from a world which is all flesh into a world which is all spirit—Christ is the meeting-point and junction of the two—through the Incarnate Son we reach the Invisible Father—‘in His blood’ as our passport, that is one thought—‘through His flesh’ as our medium of communication, that is the other.

Also, though the imagery may be a little confused by it, He is also our ‘great Priest.’ In one sense, the man is his own priest. Scripture says so—and the doctrine involved in it is essential to that independence of human priesthoods, to that principle of earnest anti-sacerdotalism, which is the spiritual liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. The text itself says so, in bidding us draw nigh, each and all, in full assurance of faith. But this independence of man is no independence of Christ. We are all priests, but it is in virtue of what the text calls, by a remarkable combination of words, our ‘great Priest.’ The word expresses the power and greatness of our Lord—it suggests also the littleness and the nothingness (in himself) of the human individual priest. ‘Having boldness to enter,’ for daily, for perpetual ministration in the very Presence where the spirit of the man meets

and deals with God who is Spirit—yet having also that without which the human priest would be a presumptuous intruder, ‘a great Priest over the house’ and living temple ‘of God’—so and so only ‘let us draw nigh.’

It is a sacred word. ‘Let us draw nigh with boldness,’ the 4th chapter said, ‘unto the throne of grace.’ It is the approach of the worshipper, or the approach of the priest, to the personal presence of the Object of adoration. Another thought is, that it is a reiterated, a constant, a perpetual coming. ‘Let us keep coming.’ Not once a year, as on the Israelite’s anniversary of atonement, but daily and hourly, in every stated and in every occasional service, in every periodical recurrence of the set times of worshipping, and in each special emergency of the natural or spiritual life. ‘Let us keep drawing nigh.’ If we could realize the two thoughts—that worship is a drawing nigh to a Person, and that that drawing nigh is the very condition and necessity of the being—we should grow apace in the life of life: men might marvel that we tarried so long in the temple, but when we came out we should have seen more than a vision there—the very skin of the face shines, as it is written, from the personal converse and from the repeated communing.

‘With a true heart,’ it is added, and ‘in full assurance of faith.’ A true is a real heart, the opposite of all spuriousness and counterfeit—that speaks for itself. The ‘faith’ demanded is a realizing apprehension of God in Christ. It is no faith in ourselves as special objects of the great love in Christ: it is the assurance of His death and of His life—of the sufficiency of the one, of the efficiency of the other. ‘He who cometh to God must believe that He is’—must see Him with the soul’s sight as the God and Father of Jesus.

Two words remain. Both are applications of Levitical figures. The priest at his consecration was sprinkled with typical blood—the priest before each ministration was to wash himself with lustral water. So is it with Christ’s priests—the individual spiritual priests which are all Christian people. They must have hearts sprinkled with the real blood which releases from a bad conscience. They must apply to themselves that all-sufficient sacrifice which was this day offered for the sins of the world. They must rid themselves of that miserable clinging and cleaving of past sins, which prevents alike the peaceful worship and the vigorous life, by resolutely taking as meant for them that great Atonement which is not universal

unless it is individual too—by determinately adopting St Paul's appropriating clause of the great charter, 'who loved me and gave Himself for me.' 'In remembrance that Christ died for thee,' are the words of the sacramental administration—'in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for thee'—'feed therefore upon Him in thy heart by faith'—'and be thankful.'

The washing of the body was a type also. Its perpetual remembrance is kept up in Baptism. Doubtless the Epistle refers to it. When a man came out from a world of heathenism or Judaism, and made application for the laver of regeneration in baptism, it was a moment full of consequences. When he came up out of that stream, it was a foreacting of resurrection. Old things had passed away, all things had become new, for him. Well might St Paul speak of it as he did. Well may the Epistle before us place it side by side with the sprinkling of the heart from the conscience of sins. It was of no customary decency of a Christendom, it was of no submission to a ceremonial sprinkling of a few drops on the forehead, unconscious on the one part, formal (too often) on the other, that these words were written—save in so far as the prayers of the faithful prevent the child with blessing, and

the watchful guiding and guarding of parental piety make the rest of the life conformable to that beginning.

With many, perhaps with most Christians, the washing of the body has to be done again, at a later moment or period of the being, by a new realization of the meaning of the Christian profession, and by a diligent daily keeping of it unspotted from the flesh. So that, practically, the two latest precepts of this text become for us, first a call to the appropriation of forgiveness, and secondly a call to the pursuit of purification—each needing to be renewed day by day; each a necessary preliminary, and still more a blessed consequence, of that perpetual drawing nigh through the blood of Jesus to which alike the text and the season should be a powerful and a persuasive summons.

O foolish, senseless, Galatians—St Paul cries—who hath bewitched you—what counter-fascination, of world, flesh, and devil, is this upon you—before whose eyes, as it were, by my labour and ministry, Jesus Christ was ‘written forth,’ was presented as in the large letters of a proclamation, fastened to the gates and walls of the city of your habitation, crucified? His marvel was, not that Jews should

count the cross an offence, or that Greeks should reckon it foolishness—but that Christian people, who had embraced it once with ardour, Christian people who had even suffered something for it in their first profession, should now, in comparison with any trifle or bauble of carnalism, see no beauty in it that they should desire it.

Too late in the world's history would the same passionate wonder breathe itself now. We are used to the neglect of the Cross and the Crucified. We are used to that utter forgetfulness of both, which alone could turn Good Friday into a feast of riot and drunkenness, compared with which its return into a common honest workday would be an honour and a consecration. But though these things excite no astonishment, is there not room still for that calm, reverent, sorrowful pondering of the mystery itself, in the calm hour of such a Service as this, to which the text to-day chosen is so suitable, so stirring, an invitation? Is there not in these hearts an echo to that pathetic 'O that I knew where I might find Him!' to which the 'let us draw nigh' of this text gives the definite as well as confident direction? Is there not in these hearts an echo to that other, that twofold, questioning of the same book of the Bible, 'How shall man be

just with God? how shall he be clean that is born of a woman?' which finds its twofold answer in the revelation here before us, of the sprinkling of the heart from an evil conscience, and the washing of the whole man with a pure water?

Let the Cross again uplifted amongst us, in the commemoration of this solemn anniversary, give point once again, give precision, give energy, to our spiritual faith and hope and love. The curtain may hang, thick and heavy, between the soul and the Presence. Yet, when we grasp it, as one who *must* enter and live, we find it to be the human nature, such as we ourselves wear it, sin only excepted, of our Saviour Jesus. In that real human nature He bore real sins, the sins that we ourselves have done and thought and been defiled with. The sin-bearing was as real as the sins. For the very purpose of bearing them He was made man—and He never swerved from that purpose till He was laid, a corpse, in the rich man's tomb. Therefore through that veil—through that body given for us, that body dying, dead, buried, risen—let us pass, by faith in the efficacy of the sacrifice, into the throne-room and into the presence-chamber of the Father glorified in the Son. Let us enter once, and we shall need no persuasion to enter again.



Within that veil is beauty and glory—rest for the weary, sympathy for the solitary, strength for the weak. He whom we there see in His glory has it for His attribute, that He giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not. Over those portals is the legend, in letters of Greek and Latin and Hebrew, that all nations may read, ‘Ask, and ye shall have—knock, and it shall be opened.’ Honour the Crucified by using the Cross—in each humble believing access to Him that sitteth upon the throne, He sees of the travail of His soul, and is satisfied.



## VIII.

*OUR STANDING IN ADAM, AND  
OUR STANDING IN CHRIST.*



## VIII.

### OUR STANDING IN ADAM, AND OUR STANDING IN CHRIST.

ROMANS V. 18, 19.

(Authorized.)

Therefore as ||by the offence of one, *iudgment* came vpon all men to condemnation: euen so by the ||righteousnes of one, *the free gift* came vpon all men vnto iustification of life.

For as by one mans disobedience many were made sinners: so by the obedience of one, shall many bee made righteous.

|| *Or, by one offence.*

|| *Or, by one righteousness.*

(Revised.)

So then as through one trespass *the judgement came* unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of righteousness *the free gift came* unto all men to justification of life.

For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous.

THIS great day, at once the darkest and the brightest in the world's history, summons us to the serious pondering of our state by nature and our state by grace. We could not more adequately express both, than by using the phraseology of this

chapter, and calling the one our condition in Adam, and the other our condition in Christ.

St Paul lived in these contemplations. They were his study, they were his exercise, they were his refreshment, they were his life. To meditate upon Christ, as having transferred him from one kind and manner of being into another, and as meeting him every day in that new being as his Master, his Owner, his motive, his strength, his reason why it was happiness to have been born, and why only it was safety and blessedness to die—this was the employment of his waking and the repose of his resting—of this he spoke to ‘all who came in to him,’ of this he wrote, as of the thing next his heart, to his absent friends and to his distant Churches.

The Roman Church was not exactly, or not yet, quite his own—for he had not founded and he had not yet visited it. Still the long list of greetings and salutations, which fills the last chapter of the Epistle, shows how many devoted friends he had there, and explains (in part) the emotion with which he addresses the Church itself, saying, ‘God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the Gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my

prayers...For I long to see you...that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.' That longing was to be satisfied some three years later, when in an unexpected form, that of bonds and imprisonment, the prediction of his Lord was verified to him, 'As thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome.'

Meanwhile, delayed in visiting them, he writes. And to this involuntary postponement of his visit to Rome the Church of eighteen centuries, the Church of all time, owes the most systematic exposition anywhere made in Scripture of the faith of Christ, in its reasons and principles, its nature and working, its relations and aspects towards God and man.

The need of the Gospel has been shown in earlier chapters from the acknowledged state of the Gentile world, and from the accepted Scriptures of the Jewish. Its character has been summarily and grandly stated, as a revelation of righteousness, not of man's making but of God's giving, to a sin-ruined and sin-bound humanity. All have sinned—there is no difference between man and man thus far, though the colour and complexion of the sinning may differ infinitely.

Justified freely, by God's grace, through faith in the atoning death commemorated to-day—this also is true of all that are saved, however various the antecedents or the circumstances, of race or religion, of profession or character, of individual men. That the principle of faith has been in all ages the characteristic of God's saints, is argued in the 4th chapter in the illustrious case of Abraham. And now he is free to expatiate in the glorious subject—showing in this chapter how tranquillizing and how strengthening is the faith which justifies—how firm the support given, to a life of trial and trouble, by the fulness and freeness of that Divine sacrifice, which waited not for human merit or human fitness, but began by giving itself for sinners, by reconciling God's enemies, yea by justifying the ungodly, and went on to pledge the love which had made atonement to an everlasting salvation from wrath and death.

As he dwells thus on the mighty theme, there rises before him, as though in vision or apparition, a twofold embodiment and headship of humanity—the one grim and ghastly, like the rider on the pale horse in the Apocalypse, whose name was Death, and with whom Hell followed—the other gracious and righteous, coming to heal and to bless, by



reversing and undoing the work of the first, insomuch that, where sin had reigned in death, there grace now reigns through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

It is in the midst of this passage—so profound, so original, so striking, as all ought to call it who will not, with us, call it inspired by the Holy Ghost—that the two sentences of the text occur. They join on, in sense if not in exact structure, to the 12th verse, from which they are severed by five verses of parenthesis, showing the utter unlikeness, in all respects save one, of the two legacies and inheritances of Adam and Christ. The minute examination of the intervening verses would be impossible to-night. We have only time for a comprehensive view of the great subject, as it lies before us in the two brief sentences of the text itself.

Two Versions of them are before us, and it is instructive to compare them. The one says, ‘Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.’ Some points of importance are lost in this rendering. ‘The offence of one’ is in the original ‘one offence’ or ‘one trespass.’ The word in the original is that

used in the 6th chapter of St Matthew, 'For if ye forgive men their trespasses.' It expresses that 'fall by the side of' the path of duty, which is one of the many metaphors for sinning. And 'the righteousness of one' is in the original 'one righteousness,' or rather (for it is not exactly 'righteousness' in the Greek) 'one righteous act' or 'one act of righteousness.' And so the Revised Version renders it. 'So then as through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation; even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life.' The two Versions agree in filling up the blanks of the sentence as St Paul wrote it, from the 16th verse—'judgment' (or 'the judgment') 'came'—'the free gift came.' The Revised Version preserves the striking contrast, 'one trespass'... 'one act of righteousness.' As one single sin condemned the race to death, so one single righteous act brought to the race acquittal, and life with it. The whole redeeming work of Christ is summed up into a single act of righteousness. The next verse explains the expression by introducing the equivalent word 'obedience.' And, if further explanation were needed, St Paul himself gives it in writing,

some three or four years later, from Rome to Philippi—speaking of Christ (in the Epistle for last Sunday) as having ‘become obedient’ to the uttermost possibility of obedience, ‘even unto death, yea, the death of the Cross.’ The ‘one righteous act’ of the text is the ‘obedience’ of the 19th verse of this chapter, the ‘obedience even unto death’ of the second chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians. Not the death by itself, but the death as the crown of the life—the self-sacrifice begun in Incarnation, continued through the three-and-thirty years of the earthly sojourn, completed and consummated on Calvary. Through this ‘one act of righteousness,’ seen by St Paul in its unity from Christmas to Easter, from the cradle in Bethlehem to the rich man’s grave, ‘the free gift of God through the grace of Jesus,’ as the 15th verse expresses it, ‘came unto all men unto justification of life’—bringing with it that absolution which has life in it—in other words, that free forgiveness of sins which gives back the forfeited union with God which is the eternal life of the soul.

By one trespass judgment unto condemnation. By one righteous act a justification which has life, eternal life, in it. This is the first change of

rendering, and it gives back to us the sharpness of a designed contrast which was obscured and blunted in the Authorized.

The following alteration is yet more important. The Authorized Version renders the 19th verse thus. 'For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.' The fourfold omission here of the definite article is a very serious loss. With what emphasis does St Paul write, as the Revised Version has reminded us, 'For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous.' St Paul did not, as some think, write Greek at random. In the 16th verse he omits the article—for there his purpose was to contrast the singleness of the sin which brought condemnation with the multitude of the sins which evoked and elicited the compassion. But in the 15th, 17th, and 19th verses the particular 'one man' who brought in sin and death is designedly set in contrast with the particular 'one man' who brought in grace and life.

The other pair of omissions is equally serious. 'Many were made sinners'...'many shall be made

righteous'...is a mere limiting gloss, and a most misleading one, upon St Paul's language. St Paul was not afraid to say above, 'Judgment came upon all men to condemnation...the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.' Neither is he afraid to say here, 'The many were made sinners,' and 'the many shall be made righteous.' 'All' and 'the many' are equivalent and convertible terms. It was not St Paul's object here to lay stress on the fact that not all will actually believe and live. His object is to show the largeness, the universality, of the provision made for all. 'The many,' the world of mankind, 'shall be made righteous'—because there is virtue in Christ for all, and room in Christ for all—the redemption is not particular but universal—Christ by His one sacrifice once offered 'made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.' If any will not have Him, He yet speaks, and means it, the universal 'whosoever will'—the gracious work of Christ in redeeming is coextensive with the disastrous work of Adam in ruining—'As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.' 'As through the disobedience of the one man the many,' the universe of humanity, 'were made (placed on the footing of) sinners, even

so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made (or constituted) righteous.'

The two parallel sayings are now before us, accurately rendered, carefully examined—let us apply ourselves to their devout, their devotional study, for a few moments, ere we reach the latest hour of this day of days.

Each of the two verses contains two weighty disclosures—of one of which (it might almost be said) St Paul is the inspired revealer, while of the other he is the chief inspired expounder. Let us give mind and soul to their pondering.

A superficial writer would never have adventured that saying, 'Through one trespass judgment came upon all men.' 'Through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners.' 'By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all sinned'—sinned, in some sense—as the Apostle goes on to argue—in him. During the long centuries that intervened between Adam and Moses, there was sin, he says, for there was death, abroad in the world. Yet those generations had not sinned after Adam's likeness. His very sin they could not commit—the sin to which the penalty of natural death was affixed—'In the day that thou eatest

thereof thou shalt die'—yet they died. Nor yet was there during that interval an express revelation of law to account for that penal dying which was become the common lot of mankind. The sin for which men died—he is speaking, in the first instance, of literal death—was not their own sin. First of all, multitudes of those deaths were deaths died before there was the power of sinning—deaths of 'infants of days,' incapable of actual transgression. But further, they were all deaths died without the breach of any law of which death was the penalty. That law ceased with the abode in Paradise—and where there is no law, there can be no transgression. That reign of death bore witness to a reign of sin—yet there is no particular sin to connect it with, but the sin of Adam. Through his transgression 'the many died:' the consequences of his sin showed themselves in the race, and made him the progenitor of an offspring of sinners, and so a type of that other and most opposite entailer of consequences upon the world of mankind, called elsewhere by St Paul, for this reason, 'the last Adam,' even 'the Lord from heaven.'

Brethren, St Paul was at least as jealous as any man now living for the equity of God's dealing with His rational and moral handywork. 'How

then shall God judge the world?' he asks in another chapter of this Epistle, and makes that a decisive reason for excluding every idea of injustice or unfairness in His treatment of mankind. It is plain therefore that St Paul was not conscious of anything inequitable in his own statement of the involvement of mankind by descent and inheritance in the ruin of the first sin. If there be anything inequitable, it must have been added to St Paul's statement by misconceptions or exaggerations for which he is not responsible. In the terms of his statement we have little more than these two particulars—first, that death came in with the Fall; secondly, that sin came in with the Fall. Account for it as you may, it is matter of history that no generation of which there is a record, in memory or tradition, has been exempt from death. Account for it as you may, it is matter of observation, and all history tells the same tale, that there is in every child born into the world an inclination or bias or predisposition, call it what you will, in the direction of evil; that a child persistently let alone by teaching and discipline will infallibly grow up wretched and wicked; that under the best of influences, domestic, educational, and social, 'there is no man that sinneth not,' no man, certainly, that has not regrets



and remorse for things done and undone, as well as many struggles and conflicts in keeping the path of right from which in a few rare cases there may have been no conscious or intentional deviation.

Now, if these things be so, there is doubtless an alternative of inference for such as possess no Scriptures of truth, or have no faith in their testimony. These things may have been thus from the very beginning. Death may have been a condition of life. Sin may have been an original defect or disease—may be due to causes which involve no blame certainly to the creature—rather, if to any one, then to the Creator—He may not have made man upright, or He may have failed to give to that uprightness the security which there ought to have been for its permanence. Or sin itself may be, on the whole and in the long run, no such evil thing, for the man or for the race, as moralists, heathen or Christian, have hitherto uniformly painted it—it may be slowly working out its own cure, and if a few millions of individuals perish by the wayside in the march towards the distant Elysium, or if a few thousands, more or less, of years are spent in attaining it, the interests of the universe must outweigh the miseries of the man, on the principle, Perish the individual, the race is the all in all.

Doubtless for the speculator emancipated from revelation there is no limit practically set to the vagaries of guessing. But St Paul read the first Volume of the Bible, and believed it. He saw nothing self-contradictory, and he saw nothing derogatory to God's justice, in the history there written of the first days of humanity—its Divine 'shalt' and 'shalt not' set as limits to its freedom—its Divine annexation of a special punishment to a special disobedience—its freedom, nevertheless, to choose and refuse in the region of duty—its fatal choice of evil, under an influence implying an earlier fall and an earlier exile in a different department of being—its consignment to the bitter effects of a wilful listening to temptation, and its entrance upon a new career of trial and difficulty, not uncheered by a still superintending Providence, yet with the light of the Presence materially dimmed and shaded, more easily lost, more fitfully realized, and with death henceforth for its perpetual memento of a transgression needing a new creation to repair its ruin.

All this St Paul read in Genesis, and read as the Word of God. He read it in the 3rd chapter of Genesis, and he read it in the 4th. 'Death by sin'—well might it be so written, when the very

page next to the record of the Fall is the record of a murder. If we have found a new Bible, or if the veil of unbelief is on our hearts as we read the old, we cannot expect to see with his eyes as he gazes into God's counsels and justifies the ways of God to man. St Paul nowhere teaches the incredible doctrine, that for the plucking of the fruit, literal or allegorical, in Eden, the men, women, and little children of six millenniums after it, are doomed from their birth to God's wrath and condemnation. What St Paul teaches is fully reconcilable with the doctrine of our own Articles, that there is a 'fault and corruption of nature in every man that is naturally ingendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil.' St Paul teaches that that 'fault and corruption' is no part of the human being as God created him—that it had a beginning in time—and that that beginning dates from a definite choice and act of our common progenitor—who consequently has entailed upon the race certain consequences—first and foremost, natural death—itsself, wherever it is, an indication of the presence of sin—a presence found even before, or in the absence of, its actual commission by the individual

agent. Thus he bids us not to 'charge God foolishly' with a condition of things which is no part of our constitution by Creation. Also he bids us to take fully into view our existing condition; for example, never to deceive ourselves, and never to flatter others, with any dissimulation of our fallen state; never to attempt to walk or to stand without grace; never to imagine that we can of ourselves think or speak or do any one good thing; and, while never calling evil good or good evil by way of bringing doctrine into visible agreement with fact, yet for ourselves to learn from the first our absolute need of God's help and God's upholding if we would ever refuse the evil and choose the good, still more if we would die the death of the righteous, or be satisfied, when we awake from death, with His likeness.

Brethren, he who would enter into the work of Christ as consummated on this day of His Crucifixion, must begin by a deep and realizing study, not once only but morning by morning and evening by evening, of his own condition as a subject of the reign of sin and death. If in some of its aspects it is a sorrowful and gloomy contemplation, there are others in which it more than prepares the soul for the light of Christ's Epiphany.

It prevents that vain expectation, which is the sure precursor of defeat and despair. I speak of that daily resolving, in the strength of self-ignorance and self-deception, which is of the nature of that 'Yet will not I' with which Peter repelled the merciful warning of his coming trial and his shameful fall. The knowledge of the truth here taught by St Paul, that 'through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners,' will inspire a humbler and therefore more gracious feeling—precluding alike the vanity of the self-hope and the misery of the self-disappointment. When we fall, it will be because we forgot the Adam-ruin, and failed to strengthen ourselves in the Christ-redemption. When we have fallen, we shall hasten back, ashamed but not daunted, to the open fountain of the perpetual forgiveness, and to the equally accessible water of the blessed 'wells of salvation.' Thus, instructed in our twofold standing, as fallen in Adam, and saved in Christ, we shall slowly but surely make our way, across the barriers of flesh and corruption, into the clear air, the bright light, and the joyous freedom, of the everlasting Home.

The time will fail us to say more than a word upon this second standing, of which it is written,

that 'by one righteous act,' the lifelong and death-crowned work of Jesus Christ, 'the free gift came upon all men;' and again, that 'by the obedience of the one man,' Jesus Christ—His obedience even unto death, as on this day—'the many shall be made righteous.' Let us love St Paul, and the Master who spoke by him, for those grand equivalent words, 'the gift of grace came upon all men'—'the many,' the world of mankind, 'shall be made righteous.' We know not what untold mysteries of wonder and grace may lurk in these sayings. This we know, that they bid us never to narrow the Gospel of grace; never to allow one passing thought of limitation or of exclusion to have place in our souls in reference to the most abject, most hopeless, most sinful, most outcast, of mankind. The free gift came upon all, even if they will not come to it. The many shall be made righteous, by Christ's will and work at any rate, even if they will erase from themselves the redeeming and consecrating superscription. It is a vast and mighty motive to carry with us to the effort to bless and save. We have not to tell men of some distant possibility, some vague and shadowy peradventure, of finding God merciful and Christ swift to hear—the free gift

is come to them, the righteousness which is life and peace is theirs by right of inheritance—they have but to stretch out the palsied arm, they have but to open the closed eye, and Christ's grace shall be sufficient, Christ shall infuse strength, Christ shall give thee light. As large and wide as is the reign of sin in death, so large and so wide, yea (St Paul says) larger yet, were it possible, and wider, is the reign of grace in righteousness. 'Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.' The ruin is frightful and terrible—the recovery is yet more beautiful and glorious: and both the one and the other are facts accomplished—the one is the Fall, the other is the Redemption: both are worldwide in their scope—in Adam all die, in Christ shall all be made alive: in Adam all are exiled and outcast, in Christ all are called and welcomed and blessed: in Adam the flaming sword turns every way to warn and frighten from Paradise, in Christ all they that will wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb have the right given back to them to the tree of life, and are bidden to enter in, loved and loving, through the gates into the city.





IX.

*THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AN  
ANTICIPATIVE RESURRECTION.*



## IX.

### THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AN ANTICIPATIVE RESURRECTION.

#### COLOSSIANS III. 1—4.

(*Authorized.*)

If yee then bee risen with Christ, seeke those things which are aboue, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God :

Set your || affection on things aboue, not on things on the earth.

For yee are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

When Christ, who is our life, shall appeare, then shall yee also appeare with him in glorie.

|| *Or, minde.*

(*Revised.*)

If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, *who is* <sup>1</sup>our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory.

<sup>1</sup> Many ancient authorities read *your*.

ST PAUL has been dealing with that strange medley of speculation and asceticism which was taking the place of the Gospel pure and simple at Colossæ. His main argument against the system of repression and abstinence, the 'touch not, taste not, handle not,' which offered itself as a panoply

against the indulgence of the body, was, not that it went too far, but that it did not go far enough, in its principles of doctrine and precept. It had a show of wisdom in its high-sounding denunciations of sensuality and intemperance, but it did not touch the spring of action, and was therefore of no real value in resistance to the indulgence of the flesh.

Our beautiful and most appropriate Easter Epistle comes in at this point.

Would you know, St Paul asks, how you may indeed be lifted above the tyranny of sense—how you may be initiated into the true secret of temperance and chastity? You must not be contented with rules and regulations, however severe and sweeping, prescribing this and prohibiting that, till the whole life is lived in chains and fetters, and the body of flesh and blood is made to feel itself the natural enemy of the spiritual health and salvation. 'Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving—for it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.' To go back to these 'rudiments of the world,' to a system of bondage and serfdom, suited only to the childhood of the race, and professing to deal only with a world of matter, is to forget altogether the

characteristic feature of your Christianity, which is a lifting of the whole man into a new region of thought and action, in virtue of his union with One no longer in the body, One who has already died and risen again, and carried you with Him into that invisible heaven where your true life is hidden with Him in God.

‘If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above...Set your affection on things above...For ye are dead.’ The Authorized Version has needlessly weakened here the force of the original, as though it put too great a strain upon the faith or experience of the readers. In so doing, it has substituted a somewhat vague and a somewhat hypothetical statement for the nervous and vigorous saying of the Apostle. It gives rather the idea of a standing which is the privilege of the few, than of a definite fact in the past which it is the business of all to realize and to use. St Paul’s words are, ‘If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is...Set your mind on the things that are above’—more exactly still, ‘have them for your mind,’ think them, feel them—‘not the things on the earth. For ye died,’ died together with Christ, ‘and your life,’ your real life, ‘is hidden with Christ in God.’

It is St Paul's characteristic doctrine. The Christian is a man in Christ. He is contained, comprehended, included in Christ. This is his safety. In one place St Paul seems almost to picture to himself a pursuit of the sinner by the avenger of blood, anticipated and disappointed by his reception into a city of refuge which is at once his fortress and his sanctuary. 'That I may win Christ, and be found in Him'—so that, when I am looked for, Christ only is to be seen.

But that inclusion in Christ, which is thus the safety of the Christian, is much more. It is his happiness, it is his strength, it is his life. He is not only saved from wrath—he is not only secure from the condemnation due to his sins in the inquisition of the great day—he is also admitted into present union with Christ, for comfort in trouble, for strength in weakness, for life in death. The Christian is in Christ for all these.

The text expresses this union in a retrospective way. He bids the man say, If I am in Christ, I am in Him as that which He is now. It is not as a Man living upon earth, a Man encased in a mortal body, subject to all its wants and pains, liable to assaults from world, flesh, and devil, having death before Him with all its terrors and

all its agonies—it is as One who has died and risen and ascended, it is as One present in the presence of God, it is as One having all power in heaven and in earth, it is as One hereafter to be seen as He is, manifested in glory, it is thus that Christ has me in Him, and, if I am to realize my inclusion in Him, it must be by living His present life, which is a life after death, a life entered upon by a resurrection. I must say to myself, When Christ died, I died; and when Christ rose from death, I too arose. When God exalted Christ to His own right hand in heaven, He set me there in Him. Henceforth I must live the risen life. I must live above the world, as one who has done with its cares and toils and lying vanities. I must live above sense and time, as one who already inhabits eternity. I must live as much above sin as the dead man in his grave, who is physically incapable of it—even as St Paul says, ‘He that is dead is freed (as though by a judicial sentence) from sin’—and St Peter, ‘He that hath suffered in flesh,’ he that hath once died, ‘hath ceased,’ hath been effectually made to cease, ‘from sin.’ ‘If ye were raised with Christ, seek the things above...If ye died with Christ, mind the things above’—have them for your interest, have them

for your employment, have them for your study and for your affection. So, when at last Christ is manifested—when the veil is taken away which at present hides Him from the living, and He is seen as He is in His beauty and in His glory—‘then shall ye also be manifested with Him’—the day of His Advent and of His Epiphany shall be also the day of ‘the revelation (or unveiling) of the sons of God.’

It would be easy to multiply quotations from St Paul’s writings in proof that this is his doctrine. The expression, ‘in Christ,’ is of perpetual recurrence—often many times in one sentence—and this is its meaning each time. In some places he expands it, as here. To the Corinthians he writes, ‘The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died’ with Him and in Him. To the Galatians, ‘I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me.’ To the Romans, ‘We were buried with Him through baptism into death’—and ‘if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also,’ even in this life, ‘live with Him ; knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more...Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ



Jesus.' And to the Ephesians, 'God, being rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, quickened us together with Christ...and raised us up with Him, and made us to sit with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.'

Brethren, the great festival of Easter is first and above all the commemoration of a fact. He who actually suffered under Pontius Pilate, He who actually was crucified, actually lay dead, actually was buried, did also actually rise again the third day from the dead. That resurrection is as much a fact in history as it is the faith of Christendom. We may say with truth that no fact in history rests on proof so infallible. For no other fact in history did one single human being ever live a life of sacrifice or die a martyr's death. They who first lived and died as witnesses of Christ's resurrection were as strongly prejudiced against it beforehand as the most determined anti-supernaturalist who scoffs at it now. The record of their incredulity is written in their own Gospels—one by one they reluctantly yielded to a conviction of the identity of the dead and risen. When the last doubter exclaimed to the risen Saviour, 'My Lord and my God,' then did the book of Christian

evidence become a roll of living lives, 'always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in the mortal flesh' which it sustained, inspired and animated.

The resurrection of Christ is a fact in history, and St Paul bids us put another fact beside it. 'Ye,' he says to the Colossians, faulty and blameable as their present state was, 'Ye,' he says therefore by clear implication to all Christian people, 'were raised with Christ.' The resurrection of Christ had a resurrection within it. To some minds a spiritual fact is a self-contradiction in terms. To those whose souls have been made alive by the power of grace no facts are so real as those which are altogether spiritual. A spiritual fact is, above all kinds of fact, a factor in history—it is this which shines and glows and kindles, it is this which sets in motion influences which change the face of nations, working those miracles of good for evil and life out of death, in comparison with which the rise and fall of dynasties are less than nothing and vanity.

'Ye were raised with Christ'—what is that fact of which St Paul speaks so confidently, making it the motive of an appeal for newness of life? 'Ye

were raised with Christ,' although, when Christ rose, you were not yet born, you were among those 'things which are not' which only the Omniscience of God can speak of 'as though they were.' 'Ye were raised with Christ,' he says still to us, though eighteen centuries separate us from the original Easter, and from the sight with our own eyes of the Person of the Risen.

Are these things words? Are they the babblings of a vain talker, the dreams of one who 'follows his own spirit and has seen nothing?' Not so, my brethren. Believe not this, though you may not yet have the grasp of the thing spoken. Be sure it was truth, truth and soberness, on the lips of the inspired man, and in the mind of the inspiring Spirit.

The thing spoken of, being closely looked into, is the vital union of the Christian man with Christ. Is there such a union? We use the word 'union,' I know, very loosely. We speak of the combination of a few hundreds or thousands of human beings, for a purpose lawful or unlawful, salutary or mischievous, as a union—little thinking what the term is which we so lightly take in vain. Union is the dream of the day—union among Churches on the footing of Episcopacy, or union within a

Church on the footing of lawlessness. This cautions us against a fallacious or shadowy use of the word in things purely spiritual.

It was no fallacious and no shadowy union which St Paul here treats as a fact involved in another fact. The Resurrection of Christ is a fact—and here he says, ‘Ye were raised with Him,’ in virtue of a union with Him very real and very substantial. The union which man cannot have with man, but which the Christian can have with Christ, is a union of spirit—such that the Spirit of the Saviour not only moves and persuades the spirit of the man, as one mind is constantly moved and persuaded by another mind through writing or speech, but also comes into, and dwells in, the man’s spirit, with a companionship and a sympathy and a gentle compulsion of willing and acting, quite distinct and different from that human influence of which we have spoken. The distinction is briefly but strongly expressed in that saying at the Last Supper, concerning the Holy Spirit as He was to them and as He should be, ‘He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.’ He dwelleth with you, in my person, in the influence of my teaching and of my example—powerful, each of them, but still external:

‘He shall be in you,’ and then the influence will be direct and immediate—you will no longer know Him as a companion, you shall know Him as an inmate—and then shall the discipleship pass into union, and the converse as of a man with his friend shall be exchanged for that communion which requires for its realization that the spirit of the man himself that is in him should be indwelt and inhabited by the Spirit of the Other, even by that Divine Spirit of whose coming it is written, ‘Because I live, ye shall live also.’ ‘My Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him.’

This is the spiritual fact, in its essence, of which St Paul here says that it makes a man so entirely one with Christ that the very death of Christ was his death, and the very resurrection of Christ was his resurrection. ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,’ another Apostle writes, ‘who according to the abundance of His mercy begat us again,’ regenerated us, ‘unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.’ That resurrection of Christ had in it our resurrection—in Him we rose into newness of life.

It is a question of intense interest, how and

when is this union realized? All Christians rose when Christ rose—this is the ideal. But what gives the individual this spiritual incorporation? St Paul says, ‘All we who were baptized into Christ did (there and then) put on Christ,’ clothe ourselves with Him. He spoke thus many times. ‘We were buried with Him by our baptism.’ He wrote to persons whose baptism was the actual and visible transition from a life of formalism or of idolatry into a life out of which ‘the old things’ had really passed away. It was so with himself. The call of Ananias to him was, ‘Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins.’ It was so with the readers of his letters. Few, if any, of them could have grown into men from Infant Baptism. If that had been then, as it is now, the common experience, we may doubt whether baptism would have come quite so prominently forward in the writings of the Apostle in connexion with the actual and even conscious translation into Christ. He might have appealed, in that case, with more confidence of their listening, to the time when by the laying on of hands they had been sealed, in years of maturity, with the gift of the Holy Ghost—or even to some later experience still of the spiritual history, when that which had once been name and form started into a

new vitality under the deep personal conviction of sin, bringing them, as for the very saving of the soul, to a fountain opened in the death of Jesus for sin and for uncleanness.

This only we will say—that, to be understood and followed by his readers, he must have spoken to their consciences as to their experience of that union with Christ which is the very root and heart of the appeal. ‘If ye were raised with Christ,’ is, in other words, ‘So surely as ye are one, in soul, with the crucified and risen Lord—so surely as you are, not in name but in deed, one with Him in His death and in His resurrection—seek the things above.... think the things above.... where He is, veiled from the world, but visible to His people.’

Brethren, if this realization of the Saviour has not yet been given to us, let us seek it, let us live it, from to-day. Let us not take refuge in names and forms, saying, I have it as a thing of course, for am I not a Christian? If you have it, you know it—it comes not into any man by taking for granted. If you have it not, yet learn from this text how near it is to you. You have but to stir up the gift. It is yours, in right and title, by the great world-wide Redemption on this day accomplished; by the call which God sent long

ages ago to England, and has never suffered to be silenced; by the individual signing and sealing of that Redemption and that Evangelization upon you in Baptism, which is always the plighted promise of God to each one in proportion to his need and in answer to his entreaty.

If the invisible Saviour seems to be far away—in an unapproachable and unimaginable place called Heaven—let not this perplex or repel you in seeking Him. Remember what St Paul says. ‘He that once descended,’ for us men and for our salvation, ‘is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things.’ It is the exaltation into the invisible which enables Him to fill the universe (such is the saying) with Himself. It is the very fact that He is in heaven, not upon earth, which makes Him present everywhere to hear and to bless. The veil which is over Him is the veil of our mortal flesh—in ourselves, not in Him, are we straitened.

‘Seek then the things above.’ What are they? St Paul sets them over against ‘things on the earth.’ What these are, we know but too well. Very real to us is that harassing anxiety, that importunate vanity, that consuming ambition, that exciting pleasure, that shameful self-indulgence,



that bosom lust, which for the moment is the life—alternating one with another in the very possession and domination of the being. In contrast with all these St Paul sets before us the things above, and by the contrast he interprets. The realities of which the others are counterfeits—the grand and satisfying pursuits of which the others are shadows and phantoms—things which bring comfort and peace and rest to the soul, a comfort from which there is no remorseful waking, a peace which passes understanding because it lies in a realm higher and deeper than intellect, a rest which is no indolence but the blissful repose of every faculty and every affection in its natural, its Divinely natural, object—these are the things above—so called, not because they are far away from us, but because they are so great and so glorious—because they are unaffected by chance and change, their home the bosom of God, their voice the harmony of the universe—hidden with Christ in God, where is the home of the immortal part of us, whither so many of the best beloved are already gone before.

Every honest searching of the heart to root out of it what God hates—every earnest effort to lay hold upon the forgiveness which is Christ's Gospel—every sorrowful tearful prayer for the help and

grace and love of God—every intense aspiration after a Diviner life than yet has been realized and a more Christ-like spirit than has yet been manifested—is a seeking of the things above. Every soul's hunger and thirst after God's kingdom and righteousness—every brave blow struck at a sin—every sincere endeavour to make an ignorant, a careless, an unhappy life beside our own, brighter and better and happier—is a seeking of the things above, in the very form of Christ's own mind when He left heaven and died on the Cross and rose and ascended on purpose that He might be the Saviour of sinners and the Lord of the dead. By degrees there shall be in every such seeker a changing of places between earth and heaven—earth shall be taking a new position, and heaven a new position, in his heart and in his affections. From seeking he shall rise into thinking the things above. And when at last the door opens and he is called in to see the King in His beauty, he shall find himself in no strange scene, in no unfamiliar company—seeking has become seeing, and prayer converse, and warfare victory—he is come to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus Himself, Lord both of the dead and living.

X.

*ENOUGH. AND TO SPARE.*



## X.

### *ENOUGH AND TO SPARE.*

#### JOHN VI. 12.

*(Authorized.)*

Gather vp the fragments that  
remaiue, that nothing be lost.

*(Revised.)*

Gather up the broken pieces  
which remain over, that nothing  
be lost.

WE close our Christian Year to-day, unusually early. The well-known Gospel, for the Sunday next before Advent, has been in our ears this morning. Great importance is evidently attached by the Church to this particular passage of the life of lives. Twice in the year, in early Spring and late Autumn, it forms the Gospel for the day. No other paragraph of Scripture is thus honoured. The incident itself is recorded by the four Evangelists. St John supplies one or two particulars not found in the other Gospels. Amongst these

are, the connexion of the miracle with the near approach of the Passover—throwing some light of explanation upon the great discourse which follows ; the preliminary question to Philip, ‘Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?’ with the motive of the question—‘this He said to prove him ;’ and the name of ‘Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother,’ as the suggester of the little lad’s presence, with his five barley loaves and two small fishes.

The evidential value of this miracle is great. Men know whether they are hungry, and when they are fed. To challenge five thousand witnesses to the truth or falsehood of such a story, was a bold venture for the young Gospel—bolder even [than the assertion of many separate home-cures of fever or palsy : we can enter, all of us, into the feeling which gave special prominence to this narrative among the ‘signs’ of grace and power given by the Son of God below.

The verse read as the text is peculiar to St John’s Gospel. It is a very obvious text for a Sermon closing the Christian Year—it has been so used in this Church before now. A little controversy has lately arisen upon it in connexion with the Revised Version—which has been accused

in some quarters of a gratuitous innovation in its substitution of 'broken pieces' for 'fragments'— 'Gather up the broken pieces which remain over, that nothing be lost.' I do not think that any member of this congregation is insensible to the important difference between the two renderings. While we read, 'Gather up the fragments,' we thought of the crumbs which had fallen from the eaters, and regarded the Saviour's words concerning them as an expression of His disapproval of waste. But now we are directed to a widely different thought. The 'broken pieces' are not crumbs or leavings at all—they are the portions dispensed by the creative hand of Christ, as He furnished from the invisible store the separate supplies for the individual guests. The 'breaking' of the bread is the distinctive point of the miracle. It has a symbolical and a sacramental meaning. 'Gather up the broken pieces' calls attention to this solemn 'breaking.' It speaks of that which gave value, meaning, existence itself, to the miraculous supply. And it brings into distinct view the rich abundance, I had almost said the lavish prodigality, of the wonder-working hand. It points attention to the superabundance of the supernatural meal—how, like the first miracle, in Cana of Galilee, with its

many firkins of wine where a far smaller quantity would have sufficed for the actual wants of the guests, this miracle also, of the feeding of the five thousand, was an example of the unbounded resources, of the ungrudged and unstinted bounties, of the Lord alike of nature and grace, who did not count the guests, and provide for just the bare want of each one, but had twelve baskets full of pieces ready broken, which remained over and above when all had eaten and all were filled. 'Gather up the broken pieces which remained over in the distribution, lest any one of them be lost.'

The change of rendering, is, in this instance, as in many others, a gain in clearness, in freshness, and in suggestiveness. 'Gather up the fragments' was a caution against waste. A good moral, in all possible senses of waste—and one not unworthy of the great Teacher. 'Gather up the broken pieces' calls attention to the generosity of grace, and bids us to take notice of the boundless stores upon which we may draw without stint or limit in all the exigencies and emergencies of the inward and outward being. See, it says to us, how the Lord, having five thousand hungry men before Him, with five barley loaves and two small fishes as His only visible starting-point, was not perplexed and



not straitened in furnishing forth His tables, but had twelve hampers full left over, when all had partaken—not of waste fragments, and not of coarse unhewn material, but of definite portions, nicely and neatly broken, ready for the use of tens or hundreds more if they had been there to want, to ask, and to receive. ‘Gather up the superfluous portions,’ that you may learn to estimate aright the omnipotent hand, and to appreciate the super-human grace and love which moves it.

We will try to observe the distinction in the plain practical lessons which we would to-day draw from the text.

Were we to speak upon the command to ‘gather up the fragments,’ we should naturally dwell upon the wasted opportunities, whether of time, or money, or influence—whether of instruction, or worship, or spiritual impulse within—with which all, more or less, have to charge themselves, in the review of a day, a year, or a lifetime, as the course of the sacred seasons brings before them the rapid flight of time and the swift approach of eternity. ‘Redeem thy misspent moments past’ is the keynote of the exhortation to gather the fragments. And there is something not only of humiliation and self-reproach, but even of despondency and

discouragement, in the occupation (while it stands alone) of filling the hampers of memory with the crumbs and leavings of a careless or thankless past.

It is otherwise when our text is, 'Gather up the broken pieces'—the portions of grace and blessing which a Divine hand had ready, over and above those which were actually wanted for the supply of the present absolute need. These are they which were not wanted to day, but which will be wanted to-morrow. These are the reserves of grace—kept back till we need them—then, not requiring to be brought into being, only to be brought into use, by our 'receiving (as it is written) out of His fulness grace for grace.'

Not only are the two lessons distinguishable from each other—the gathering of the fragments and the gathering of the portions—there is even a sense in which the latter lesson is corrective of the former,—replacing a spirit of profitless regret by one of entirely healthy and wholesome hope.

If this were the place or the occasion for such reflexions, we might hazard the remark that the occupation of too many statesmen and too many Churchmen in these times is a perpetual 'gathering up of the fragments' of a regretted past, thought to

have left behind it nothing but a present of inferiority and a future of despair. Their one effort is, to clutch with an almost feverish tenacity the relics and remnants of a vanishing perfection. To prove that a thing was, is, to prove that it ought to be. To show, of this or that, among the conceivable courses of action, that its footsteps are backward, towards the good and the beautiful of an original idea or a primitive antiquity, is at once to establish its right to the choice and acceptance of the generation that is and of the generation that shall be. It is needless, and it would be impertinent, to exemplify. But the fact is so—that there is a temper and a principle of fragment-gathering, which would preclude all thought of progress, and make the one measure of the national or ecclesiastical well-being the closeness of its approximation to the thing that was, and to the original which has been departed from.

I. We may linger for one moment in the collective, ere we pass to the individual. The Church, at all events—the great spiritual temple of Jesus Christ upon earth, which St Paul calls the very pillar and ground of the truth—is dear to all our hearts, whatever may be our particular conception of its nature and embodiment amongst

us. Now we know how unquestionable an axiom it is with many, that this Church of Jesus Christ came down from heaven absolute and perfect, was realized in the first days in a sinless ideal, and has been going backward ever since by reason of human meddling and worldly accretion. Such men read with blind eyes the testimony of Corinth's vanity and impurity, of Ephesus's waning love and Laodicea's sickening lukewarmness. They persist in maintaining that it must be the one object of the Church Universal, the one object therefore of every such branch of it as is the Church of England, to reproduce in every particular the organization, the government, and the discipline, of the infant establishment of Philippi, of Thyatira, of Lystra, or of the two Antiochs. If in any respect the hand of Providence has precluded the reproduction—as we must venture to believe is the case with many details alike of management and of discipline—such persons sit in the perpetual dust and ashes of an unpractical self-tormenting, just because (to use the figure before us) they translate the *κλάσματα* into 'fragments' instead of 'portions,' and spend all that time in gathering up the wasted, which ought to be spent in making the very most of the reserved and the treasured up.

The 'Lo, I am with you alway,' which is the Church's charter, points rather to a perpetual growth, to a constant renewing of the youth, to a perennial adaptation of arrangements to circumstances, to a vital and vivid Presence in the Church living, local, and national, than to a rigid invariable form of being, from which any deviation must be wrong and any departure fatal. The 'broken pieces' are the reserve of the Church—the portions which were superfluous for one age, but which are kept back in the Divine storehouse to be the food of another. To gather the fragments is a doleful and a dubious economy—to gather the portions which remained over, is the salutary employment, is the very life and hope, of the Church that has a Risen Lord and a spiritual Presence.

So then let us who would be sons of a living not of a dead Church be quick to catch the signs of His will who created in the beginning some things for present use and some for future. 'Let nothing be lost'—no, not if it had no use and no place at all in the particular age to which our memory turns most fondly. The Church lives by its elasticity—by its power of reading the signs of the times and of adapting itself to their exigencies. We have had enough of the servile copying and

the monotonous stereotyping—let us be free to look below the surface, let us be bold to look above the things that are seen—let us say now, Where the one Spirit is, there is the one Lord: neither in Jerusalem nor on Gerizim is the acceptable worship: God is a Spirit—it is they that worship in spirit whom the Father seeketh to worship Him.

I know that wisdom must regulate such expansions, and that fanaticism might easily make havoc of the faith altogether in this age of unlimited questioning and of deified common sense. I only say, Be not satisfied with the gathering of the fragments: prove all things: see whether even in new expedients, see whether even under new and at first sight unpleasing forms, there may not be presented one of these ‘broken pieces,’ not wanted once, but wanted now, of solid nutriment, of Divine provision.

2. Our step is firmer and less tentative when we enter upon the individual ground. Here, at all events, we must hold that the charge to gather up the fragments may beneficially be replaced by the charge to gather up the portions.

There are those whose very life is the fragment-gathering. The home of the childhood, the sur-

rounding of the cradle and the peopling of the nursery, is the rule and measure of the advancing, the waning, and the expiring being. To be ever counting up the lost treasures, to keep each birthday as a fast and each deathday as a desolation, is, with these, a tribute owed alike to God and to the departed, a help to that sombre and solemn spirit which befits the victim of sorrow and the heir of mortality. It needs no words, but those which barely state the fact, to show the utter caricature of Christianity exhibited in such a representation.

But in spiritual matters, is this frame of mind altogether discountenanced by guides and confessors? Is not this very much the principle (to take one example) of many establishments for the reclaiming of penitents? Is it not the one aim of many systems of religion, to deepen the sense of sin by dwelling almost exclusively in the charnel-house, in the 'valley full of bones,' of a guilty and self-accusing memory? Is it not the tendency of many who are not inmates of religious houses nor votaries of semi-Romanist systems, to deal with themselves, out of the sight and hearing of other men, upon this same principle of retrospect and fragment-gathering? Need we say with what

enfeebling and paralyzing effects upon the vigour and enterprise of the man? Need we say how vast would be the change, in the direction of spiritual health, if there were a voice to whisper into that dull languid ear, 'Christ said not, Gather up the fragments of the past being—but, Gather up the pieces broken by my hand for the support of the life that is, and of the life that shall be'?

It is indeed a gloomy waste upon which we all, the best of us, have to look back. If we think but of the best and holiest hours of the past, its prayers and its Sermons, its Services and its Sacraments, there is little but regret and sorrow, self-shame and self-abhorrence. And if we turn to its average colour and texture—to its everyday thoughts and words, principles and practices, motives and influences—what is there but disappointment and discomfiture for the dispassionate judgment, for the Christ-taught review, to bring back with it?

And we are very far from saying that there ought not to be times and seasons even of uttermost self-prostration in the remembrance of this waste. If we are vain, if we are self-satisfied, if we are indolent and idle in spiritual effort, let us by all means take a grave retrospect—one look will be sufficient



for most of us—of the use made by us, in times past, of Christ's wonderful love, of God's incredible patience. Having done so, we shall feel that absolute despair must take and hold possession, if the gathering of the fragments is the one business of Christians—if there is not also a gathering of the broken pieces lawful and possible for the very worst and vilest of the guests at the table of the living.

Brethren, we could not preach, we could not work, we could not live, if we had no Gospel but a gathering of the fragments.

Not backward are our glances bent,  
But forward to our Father's home.

It is because we believe that in a certain true sense God begins afresh with us each morning—has a word of love and hope for us, such as we are, and whatsoever that be—that we are able to stagger or to totter forward on the difficult way, casting ourselves upon the help that is mighty, and upon the hope that is set before us in Gethsemane and Calvary, in the tomb sealed and opened, in the death, and in the life after death, of the Crucified and Risen and Glorified.

Yes, our eye shall rest, not on the crumbs that lie there dropped from the table that was spread

yesterday or spread years ago in this wilderness—relics and memories of means of grace, of spiritual dealings, trifled with or but half valued, in days that are gone never to come back again as they were—but upon the twelve baskets filled to overflowing with the remainder and the superfluity of priceless good, with the ‘compassions that fail not, and the mercies that are new every morning,’ even for us the inexcusably loitering, even for us the unthankful and the evil.

‘Forgetting,’ St Paul says, ‘the things behind’—‘reaching forth,’ St Paul says, ‘to the things that are before.’ I know that the things behind him were very different indeed from the things that are behind me. His were memories of labours and watchings, of trials and sufferings, of self-sacrifices and daily dyings, cheerfully borne for the Master he loved, and yet flung aside, in the very doing and bearing, as worthless and despicable in comparison with the unspeakable gift which was at once their moving spring and their only value. Still I think that, if St Paul’s past had been such as that of some of us, he would have said, none the less, as one who knew God and man as few have known either, ‘Forget the things behind—spend not the precious time in gathering up fragments—stretch

every nerve for that which is before, fill both your hands with the contents of the twelve baskets.'

Be it thus, with me and with you, beloved brethren, in the day that is, in the days, few or many, that shall be. We will throw ourselves upon the grace that is treasured up for us in Jesus Christ. We will come, as needy and destitute, to be supplied out of His fulness. 'Live for the day' shall be our motto. He has distributed into manageable portions His gift of time. Not life as a whole, but a life made up of days, this is His thoughtful arrangement alike for the recovery of His lost ones, and for the safe and sure progress of the faithful. We will begin afresh the spiritual life morning by morning—we will receive out of His fulness the grace needed for the day—with the morrow we will trust Him.

None of us have come to the bottom of those twelve baskets which are not so much the residue as the reserve of grace. We may leave them closed, but never shall we have exhausted them. The pieces that remain are a thousand-fold more than the original supply: five little loaves were the one—twelve immense baskets full are the other.

Only let this Gospel of a free and unupbraiding

giving stir up and stimulate, not relax and enfeeble, the earnestness of the asking. There is a work to be done—‘that ye believe in Him whom God hath sent.’ There is a sin unto death—it is the treading under foot the Son of God, and counting the blood of the covenant a common thing. He has brought us safely to the beginning of another day—He has given us the assurance thereby that the throne of grace is for us still accessible—on purpose that we may hear His call once again to gather and to treasure the reserves of His grace, till we sit down with Him at His table in His kingdom, and ‘read the mystery right, in the full sunshine of His smile.’

XI.

*HOPE PERFECTLY.*



## XI.

### HOPE PERFECTLY.

#### I PETER I. 13.

(*Authorized.*)

Wherefore gird vp the loynes  
of your minde, bee sober, and  
hope †to the end, for the grace  
that is to bee brought vnto you  
at the reuelation of Iesus Christ.

† *Gr. perfectly.*

(*Revised.*)

Wherefore girding up the loins  
of your mind, be sober and set  
your hope perfectly on the grace  
that <sup>1</sup>is to be brought unto you  
at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

<sup>1</sup> *Gr. is being brought.*

THE precept of hope, like the precept of joy, is characteristic of the Gospel. The duty of patience, the duty of perseverance—of bearing up under all inflictions, of struggling on amidst all difficulties—of even taking a cheerful view of things, for the sake of others, or for your own—seem all to lie within the province of good sense and right reason, needing no inspiration to suggest or to enforce them. But to make joy a duty, to make hope a

duty—to speak of them as lying within a man's own reach, and as essential elements of holy living—this is much more. This shows a wonderful confidence in the supernatural, both for revealing and for influencing; and at the same time goes a long way towards accounting for the attraction which the Gospel has had for all sorts and conditions of men, and for the power which it has undoubtedly exercised upon human character and human life.

Let us take these words, 'Hope to the end,' for our New Year's motto. There is an inexhaustible fund of strength in them. They will bear much pondering. They will explain to many of us the feebleness of our past. They will point us to a better and a stronger and a brighter future.

'Hope to the end' is very forcible and very beautiful. 'Hope perfectly' is the more exact rendering, and is in reality fuller still and more comprehensive. It gives us just two words—of which the latter at once directs and corrects the former.

I. 'Gird up the loins of your mind,' says St Peter, 'and hope.'

Hope is one province of faith. Only one province. It is less than faith, in two ways. First, it has to do only with the future, whereas faith busies



itself also with the past and with the present. Whatever is not at this moment in sight, though it was so an hour ago and will be so an hour later, is for this moment an object of faith. Every historical fact and every historical person—every future thing, tomorrow's sunrising, next year's harvest—every invisible reality, whether thing or person—the love which is your chief joy, the heaven which you hope for, the God to whom you pray—is alike, if not equally, an object of that faith which Scripture defines for us as the assurance, or conviction, of things not seen.

Hope is one department of faith. It is the faculty by which you apprehend the future. Like faith, it is the soul's sight—but, unlike faith, it is applicable only to an invisible *future*.

There is yet a second limitation. Fear, like hope, has regard to the future. Fear, like hope, may be a department of faith. But there is this difference. Fear is the apprehension of a future conceived of as painful. Hope is the apprehension, more or less definite, of a future conceived of as pleasurable. 'Gird up the loins of your mind, and hope,' bids a man to make an effort to realize a pleasant future. It bids him to make a strong mental exertion to apprehend a revelation of joy.

It is not a common precept—for the idea is not common. We do not usually regard hope as a duty, or even as a virtue. We treat it as circumstantial, depending upon conditions which we cannot control. And we treat it as constitutional, the gift of nature to one man, denied by nature to another man. Composure, submission, equanimity, might find a place in a human system of morals: Christianity alone places hope there—makes hope a virtue, and consequently makes the pursuit and practice of hope a duty.

And yet, when we reflect upon it, is not this new estimate of hope at once reasonable and wholesome? Without hope, what is a man fit for, even in the things of this life? A politician who has no hope—a churchman who has no hope—an adviser who has no hope—a toiler who has no hope—what has he, what is he, as a contributor to the progress, to the wisdom, to the health or wealth or work of the world? If he is in the council-chamber of the Church or State, it is his one occupation to descry and to prophesy evil. Every reform is for him a revolution: every modification of the thing that has been is a rush headlong to ruin. Any most remote, most contingent anxiety is, for him, an inevitable disaster—each smallest difficulty a fatal

entanglement—each faintest whisper of peril the national death-knell. While others attend to him, the wheels of progress are stayed—when he has wearied out his auditory, he himself becomes a laughingstock. Place the same man in a less conspicuous station, confine him to the region of private action and influence—this destitution of hope makes his own success impossible, and thwarts every effort after progress in the man who takes him for his counsellor.

If, which is quite possible, the man without hope is a religious, in some sense a Christian man, we see the effect of that one fatal deficiency, in a thousand deeds and words dishonouring his faith. There is a general tone of depression and disheartenment, which repels all ardent and generous natures from the very wish to be like him, and subtracts the sum total of his convictions and exertions from the influence of religion upon the world of mankind. It is more than probable that in his own innermost life the want of hope leaves him but a timid fighter against the banded and serried forces of the world, the flesh, and the devil. We are reminded of the saying of the Apocrypha, surely (in such places) not without some breath of inspiration, ‘Woe be to fearful hearts, and

faint hands, and the sinner that goeth two ways! Woe unto him that is faint-hearted! for he believeth not, therefore shall he not be defended. Woe unto you that have lost patience! and what will ye do, when the Lord shall visit you?'

2. But it cannot be denied that there is a kind of hoping which is not 'after God.' St Peter adds to his precept of hope the word 'perfectly.' 'Gird up the loins of your mind, and hope perfectly.'

(1) This seems, first of all, to correct that sort of false hoping which is as dangerous as timidity itself to the soul's life. We know what it is, in the affairs of this life, to hope, not reasonably, but on a principle of venturing and hazarding all things. The man who is playing the fool with his life, who is daily risking health and fortune and character in every kind of reckless or riotous living, is yet 'hoping' all the time that some miracle of chance—perhaps he even dares to say, of Providence—will rescue him again and again, and all through, from the natural consequences of his own conduct. The man who is making no provision whatever for the everlasting future—who never prays one earnest prayer to the God of life and death for pardon and grace—yet 'hopes' that something will happen, before he dies, to turn him into the very

opposite of all that he is, so that he may die the death of the righteous, and awake up after God's likeness, whatever that may be, to the enjoyment of a kind of life, the exact opposite, in every respect, of all that till that moment he has regarded as happiness. The man who looks abroad upon a world spoilt and ruined by sinning—reads every day the most horrible details of agonies caused and incurred by the letting loose upon earth of every demon of lust and crime—yet idly 'hopes' that nothing will come of it, in the long run, but what one breath of silly wishing may reverse and undo in a moment of time or a moment of eternity. Therefore, when St Peter wrote that word 'perfectly,' he may be supposed to have meant, first of all, 'Hope wisely'—banishing, as it were, from the very precincts of the precept all that hoping which is instead of trying, against reason, and at variance with every principle of sobriety and good sense.

(2) But there is more than this in the word. When St Peter writes, 'Hope perfectly,' he means above all things, to judge by the context, 'Hope definitely,' on the ground of a Divine revelation involving three things—a past, a present, and a future.

The precept of hope rests upon a basis of fact. 'God begat us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.' St Paul writes more briefly but in the same tone, 'Jesus Christ who is our hope.' And where else, my brethren, can hope find any rest for the sole of her foot on an earth so disorganized, so 'out of course,' so dark with storm-clouds of wrath, as this which God hath 'given (a Psalmist writes) to the children of men?' We are not to disparage the mercies and blessings which 'hover around' most lives—all lives, so far as the gift and continuance of the being itself goes. But as for hope, if this were all—as for hope, with regard to the creature as a whole—as for hope, with reference to an undoing of the thing done, and a remaking of the thing spoilt, and a restamping of the defaced image and superscription upon the coin of humanity itself—I do not see what warrant, what beyond a mere guess or a mere peradventure, hope could have found, without that which St Peter here calls a Divine regeneration—in other words, a Divine intervention and interposition definitely designed to 'make all things new.'

This in the past. But St Peter says further that there is a definite footing for hope also in the present. He speaks of those 'who by the

power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed.' It is an appeal to the experience of his readers. They know, he says, the thing spoken of—and therefore to hope 'perfectly' is, for them, to hope rationally. It is but to believe that the life which is now shall live on, that the power which is at work now shall work on, that the only use and aim of this present Divine dealing shall not be baffled but realized—and hope springs naturally out of experience: there is a basis of fact in the present, as in the past, for hope to stand upon, when she looks forward and reaches forth into an invisible heaven.

Thus the past and the present link themselves with the future, and St Peter can add, 'Hope perfectly for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.' The original is stronger and more expressive. 'The grace that is being brought to you.' For already the forces are at work which shall 'bring.' Every thing is working towards, working up to, yea working out, that consummation which waits but for the 'unveiling,' that He may be seen as He is, of Jesus Christ. To hope 'perfectly' is to hope definitely. For the regeneration in the past is a conscious safe keeping in the present, and already the glory of the future Epiphany

is in course of realization in every Divine dealing whether of Providence or of grace.

(3) To hope perfectly is to hope reasonably, to hope definitely, and thus, thirdly and lastly, it is, to hope resolutely. There is much in the experience of all of us to make hope, even Christian hope, tremble and vacillate. The opening year stirs thoughts, in all hearts, not joyous but grievous. It is not only or chiefly the outward occurrences of the past which throw their shadow upon the present. No doubt we are poorer, many of us, this New Year's Day, than we were one year ago, in some of the dearest ties of the personal life. Long have Christmas and New Year's Day ceased, for many of us, to have any clear ring of earthly joy and gladness. Our joy must become the echo of younger joys, if it is to keep any note of itself within. But this, if this were all, might tend rather to quicken hope than to damp it. The more our treasures are stored above, the more predominant should be the hope of a reunion. Memory and hope should more and more be blended, and the darkening of the sky of earth should be itself the lighting up of the glory that shall be revealed.

And yet the charge to hope resolutely does



not practically become each year easier to obey. On the contrary, there is, too often, a new flatness and dulness settling down upon our spirits, just when we most need all the freshness and liveliness of the 'good hope through grace.' Heaven does not grow brighter as earth darkens—no, not in the elect. Many who in the days of their youth could discourse eloquently, and with a full consent of conscience, upon the pleasures which are at God's right hand, have to keep their hold upon these glories by a sort of 'violence' as the time for entering in draws nearer and more imminent. 'I have peace, I have not joy,' is the testimony of one and another of God's saints, just when they who have followed their footsteps at a distance in reverence and humility would fain catch from them some ecstatic or triumphant utterance as they near the dark river and 'the land that is very far off' just beyond it.

'Hope resolutely' is a precept never superfluous even for the faithful. There is a languor and a drowsiness, more than half perhaps physical, which yet lies with a discouraging influence upon the soul of the wayfarer. He is not what he once hoped to be in the near prospect of the dissolution. With less of strength than once even for spiritual

effort, he seems to need it more than ever if he would know anything of the joyous frame and the 'abundant entrance.'

We speak of things high above us in presuming to scan the latest spiritual feelings of the Christian. But we are fully within our own range and our own limit, when we tell of the difficulty of hoping resolutely, as it shows itself on an occasion like the present of looking back and looking forward. Experience is against us in hoping great things. We cannot feel that we have made any marked advance, or won any decisive battle, since we were last reviewing an added year of the normal 'three-score and ten or fourscore.' If we were to say that we could hope to incur no new sin, to add no new item to the guilty reckoning, in the year on which we are entering, we should be saying more than the past experience warrants. Yet of all thoughts none is so paralyzing as that of the *future* sinning which is all known to God as we kneel before Him for pardon of the past, and might provoke Him to repel us from His footstool with the prophecy of that transgression which might seem to make the prayer itself a mockery. This indeed were an abuse of the Divine foreknowledge—for He who desires not the death of any sinner does not suffer

even the foresight of backsliding to check the absolution of the penitent.

But it ought to make us grave, it ought to make us serious, to remember how often we have belied our own prayers by going back to the sins from which we asked deliverance. It ought to make us say, as we address ourselves to a new and untried year of doing and suffering, 'Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off.' Many a fair profession, many a vow registered at God's Table, may be falsified, may be broken, ere next New Year's Day, by us who are worshipping with all earnestness and all solemnity to-day. It is this thought, even more than that of the undiscoverable secrets of sorrow and bereavement which lie in it, which gives its real awe to this New Year's Day, and makes it so difficult to take home to our hearts the precept of that 'perfect hoping' to which St Peter here summons us.

Nevertheless, and with the fullest and deepest sense of its difficulty, we will take it for our watchword and our motto, 'Hope perfectly.' Yes, God is faithful, who gave His Son to take upon Him our nature, and in it to suffer and die, to rise and to ascend. God is faithful, who will not

suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but with every temptation will make also the way to escape. God is faithful, who, when we fall, will not cast away—will make even weakness, even inconstancy, even sin, repented of and arisen from, minister to self-knowledge, to humility, to watchfulness, and so to sanctification. God is faithful, who, as He loved us when we were sinners, so deals with us as sinners still—providing not less for the discipline of the combatant than for the crowning of the conqueror. God is faithful, who will not leave us till He has done that which He has spoken to us of, may we but trust Him and hope in Him even to the end.

He is carrying one and another, of those who but yesterday were beside us in the race, into the rest which remaineth, into the heaven which Christ opened to all believers. One such life is just ended, and it cannot be unsuitable in this place to ‘comfort ourselves’ in the thought of it. The great Profession which here worships has lost many of its great men within the year now ending. The year ends for us in mourning. A Judge honoured of all men for public services and for private virtues will be laid in the grave to-morrow, leaving a bright example behind him of

industry, of integrity, of purity, of kindness—of a faith not ashamed of its Lord, and a charity that made room for all His people. I must not speak—though I could speak—of the love that reigned in that home; a love sorely lacerated by a late bereavement, of the comforting of which in an everlasting reunion it is delightful to think to-day. He who is gone from us was in one sense not quite of us: he was one of the old race of conscientious Non-conformists, never ashamed of belonging to one of the least fashionable of dissenting denominations, yet with a hand and a heart ever open to the members and the ministers of the Church from which he never felt himself severed, and in which, from time to time—we ourselves have seen it—he was willing and thankful to worship. He is gone. We shall not lose the memory of him—that face radiant with goodness, that tongue sagacious in judgment. One week ago he was ‘hoping perfectly;’ now for him the ‘perfect is come.’ ‘Whose faith follow, considering the end of His conversation,’ and remembering that Jesus Christ, his Lord and his God, is the same yesterday and to-day and for ever.



XII.

*TWO MOMENTS OF A LIFE.*





## XII.

### TWO MOMENTS OF A LIFE.

#### HEBREWS XII. 17.

(*Authorized.*)

For yee know how that afterward when hee would haue inherited the blessing, hee was reiected : for hee found no || place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with teares.

|| *Or, way to change his minde.*

(*Revised.*)

For ye know that even when he afterward desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected (for he found no place of repentance), though he sought it diligently with tears.

THIS solemn verse—for solemn it is on every interpretation—is the inspired commentary upon the pathetic but painful chapter which is the first lesson for the day. The moral of that chapter is not obvious. Every one concerned is to blame—except (at first sight) the one person who is punished. The weak father, the intriguing mother, the cunning and lying brother, all by turns incur our disapproval—whereas the victim of the deception

draws from us nothing but compassion, nothing but sympathy, till we find him, in the last verses of the chapter—which perhaps on this one account it was unwise to omit from the Sunday Lesson at the last rearrangement—uttering those purposes of a bloody revenge, which, however natural under the circumstances, make him the worst of the whole family ere he quits the stage.

But the text, looking back upon the history from Gospel days and with Christian eyes, is able to brush away these cobwebs of natural feeling, and to bring into view the entirely true and entirely useful principle which the everlasting Word illustrates in this terrible picture of a divided and demoralized home. In all its parts the Epistle to the Hebrews may be briefly named the Gospel of the Old Testament. It interprets types, it illuminates prophecies, above all it seizes the point of characters, devoting a whole chapter to the showing how faith was the one key of lives the most diverse and at first sight the most incongruous—and then, having given in that eleventh chapter the single redeeming feature of the story of this day's Lesson, in the words, 'By faith (for there was something of faith in that resolute adherence to words ignorantly spoken) Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau

concerning things to come,' it recurs here, in a different connexion, to the history of Esau as a whole, delivering to the Church of Palestine, on the eve of its great catastrophe, this memorable warning—'Look to it that there be no man among you falling short of the grace of God—that there be not among you any profane person, as Esau, who for one mess of meat sold his own birthright; for ye know that even afterward,' long years after that youthful profanity, 'when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected—for he found no place of repentance—though he sought it carefully with tears.'

It is scarcely necessary in this congregation to guard against a possible misconception of the latter part of the text. With the punctuation of the Authorized Version (which has been most carefully remodelled in the Revised) it was tempting to an English reader, and by no means impossible even for a student of the Greek, to understand the little word 'it' as referring, not to the blessing, but to the repentance, spoken of above; to read the passage as saying that Esau had sought repentance in vain with tears—a statement unwarranted by the story in Genesis, and introducing a fearful doctrine into the theology of Christendom. To avoid this,

which the gender of the word for 'it' in the Greek made a possible interpretation, others have understood the 'repentance' spoken of to be not Esau's but Isaac's—to be, not a change of heart in the son, but a change of mind in the father such as all the tears and all the entreaties of Esau failed to bring about. But for such a change of mind there is a different word in Greek, with which the solemn term 'repentance' is never, I believe, interchanged.

The Revised Version has placed the seven words 'for he found no place of repentance' in a parenthesis, and thus leaves the main sentence to read without any ambiguity, 'When he afterward desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected... though he sought it (the blessing) diligently with tears.'

There remains yet one word of explanation, upon the expression 'place of repentance.' It sounds as though Esau found no room or scope for repenting—found, in other words, the grace of repentance denied him, when, suppose, after long impenitence for his sin in selling the birthright, he at last began earnestly to wish to repent. Our common phrase, *locus penitentiæ*, derived (I suppose) from the Latin Version of this very passage, should have taught us a truer lesson. To give a

man a *locus penitentiæ* does not mean to give him the grace of repentance—does not mean, exactly, to give him time and space for repenting—but, to give his repentance room to operate, the penalty due to his crime being relaxed or cancelled for the purpose. Esau's repentance found no such room to operate : he could not obtain that reversal of the just retribution, which his bitter tears and pathetic cries asked for.

There is no doubt that the sacred writer had no intention, when he wrote the great word 'repentance' and applied it thus to Esau, of either vouching for Esau's conversion, or of recording any decision (either way) as to his eventual condition. That Esau bitterly lamented the act of his youth, when he found it entailing the loss of the firstborn's blessing, is all that entered into the necessities of the case in its lesson for Christian times. The word 'repentance,' utterly inapplicable, as I have said, to Isaac, in the sense of a mere revocation of his blessing pronounced upon Jacob, had an application, more or less full, to Esau, in the sense of a change of mind as to a former immoral act of his own. That faint applicability of the term 'repentance' to Esau, suggests its introduction here, where the subject in question is altogether moral and

spiritual, Take heed lest there be among you an impure or a profane man, who, despising on earth his birthright of grace, shall vainly wish back, in Hades, his benediction of glory.

Thus then we are brought into the heart of the inspired lesson, and it is as simple in application as it may have seemed to some intricate in explanation.

1. The profane man begins by selling his birthright. There was a profanity in the literal selling, for Esau. The bold hunter, the man of field sports and athletic exercises, comes in, one common day, exhausted with hunger. He falls in with his cool and calculating brother, with his tempting mess of steaming pottage—and, before he is allowed to share the meal, the ‘supplanter’ will drive a bargain with him. For this same mess of meat sell me now thy birthright. A harsh and cruel proposal—but it had in it just the alternative, which all temptation presents to us, between the momentary and the permanent, between the enjoyment of the time that is and the happiness of the long, the everlasting, day that shall be.

For in that birthright, you must remember, there lay some special prerogatives of the chosen family. There was not only the double portion, and not only the honourable precedence, and not

only the promised inheritance of the land itself in which they were strangers—there was also the priesthood of the house, and the ancestorship of Him that should come—privileges of which it was faith to think highly, and lack of faith to make light.

Esau's choice was made—and Jacob held him to it. 'Behold, I am at the point to die—and what profit shall this birthright do to me?' Hunger is sharp and imperious : for the moment it drives out alike reflexion and forethought : the thing that shall be, whether to-morrow, or a year hence, or for ever, pales and fades in comparison with the tyrannical sense which perishes with the using. That remote possession, the very prophecy of which spoke of centuries to pass before its realization; that ideal progenitorship of a Messiah, the very want of whom is unrealized in this boyish boisterous 'man of the field'—can it feed me? can it do more than mock this sharp appetite with a prospect utterly incongruous? 'Swear,' says the tempter, self-possessed and collected—and word and oath are as one to the creature whose lord is the body. 'He sware, and he sold his birthright...he did eat and drink, and rose up and went his way...thus Esau despised his birthright.'

There came a day when Jacob saw things differently. The experiences of Bethel and of Mahanaim and of Peniel were not lost upon him : the trials of his life were many: exile and servitude, pilgrimage and bereavement, sorrows from his sons and chastenings in many a night season, did their work upon him as the years ran their round—and his deathbed was a saint's thanksgiving to the God who had guided him all his life long, to the Divine Angel who had redeemed him from all evil.

And how and what of Esau? A 'repentance' of some sort the text seems to speak of—and it is never the purpose of Scripture to gratify curiosity as to spiritual destinies. The characters of the Bible do their work, for example and warning, and go their way : like ourselves, they are in the hands of God, and He giveth not account, for curiosity's sake, of any of His matters.

But to us they speak that which God gave them for—and Esau speaks, in the first half of his history, to give us solemn warning of one peril—*the* peril, it might be made to be, of the fallen and sense-bound creature—the peril, the sin, and the punishment, of profaneness.

To be profane is to count holy things common. To be profane is to be blind to the vision and deaf



to the voice of God. To be profane is to see actions and habits, pains and pleasures, men and things, only in their present, not at all in their future—or, if in their future at all, still only in their earth-bounded future, as conducing to the good or the evil of a world in which the three realities, God, the soul, and eternity, have neither part nor lot. To be profane is to catch at the momentary relief or gain or enjoyment, and to overlook for its sake the spiritual, the heavenly, the eternal. To be profane is to have no vital apprehension, no intense realization, of things and Persons unseen—to move amongst Divine truths as amongst phantoms and shadows, and to count nothing real and nothing substantial but the employments, ambitions, and affections of that state which a hundred years at the very uttermost span and bound for each one.

Do we now see why the story of Esau was written in Scripture? Can we now feel the force of that warning, ‘lest there be any profane person, as Esau’? What else is the life of the human being till God deals with him in grace? What else is the life lived in hunting-fields and ball-rooms, in counting-houses and libraries, in courts of justice and houses of Parliament, innocent as all of these may

be under certain conditions—useful as some of them are, and even elevating, under certain conditions—yet, in themselves, and as the sum and aim of being, still, of necessity, and by no fault of theirs, utterly alien and indifferent, silent and dormant, to the things of spirit which are the things of God? It is not to teach a fanciful and fanatical estimate of the interests of this life—it is only to bring into them just that one higher thought which shall transfigure and transubstantiate them into very means and sacraments of blessing—that Scripture, which is God's Word written, speaks this day to conscience, which is God's ear implanted, saying, Take heed, brethren, lest there be among you so much as one single profane person such as he was who for a mess of meat sold his birthright.

2. Thus we pass to the other half of Esau's history as written and emphasized for us in Scripture. One feels, in passing, how solemn, how terrible it is to have two days, two hours, two minutes, of a man's life, thus made, in sum and substance, the whole of it. Life is in one sense, in a merely prosaic view of it, a certain duration and extension of time—very monotonous, very much of one colour—yesterday, to-day and to-morrow just alike—with no distinctiveness of any one part,

beyond the obvious changes of age, place, and circumstance. In another sense—and I must say that the Bible takes this for its view of life—a few salient points mark and stamp the whole: one day may have a thousand years in it—one little incident may make the life either good or evil. One five minutes had in it the sale of the birth-right—and one other five minutes had in it the loss of the blessing—and those two small events were and are the life: that was what Esau lived for—being dead, this is what Esau yet speaks.

That first act, from which Esau rose up and went his way, and counted and called it nothing, had in it, as its direct consequence—all those long years (as the text strikingly says) ‘afterward’—that other, that only other, event of his life, which was passive, not active.

I do not say that lives are commonly so hung upon one action or upon one moment of them. There are lives which have no moments, I had almost said no actions, in them—so flat and dull, so neutral and negative are they, from birth to the grave. But there are those who can distinctly trace to one great mistake, to one wilful error, to one heinous sin, which stands out in the full blaze of memory as the very crisis and turning-

point, all the griefs and all the miseries of the threescore years and ten. They will deeply sympathize with this Scripture record of a life of two and but two moments: only they must not misread its lesson—for Scripture never speaks to dishearten—always, rightly read, to guide, or else to guide back, into the way of peace.

Esau, the text says, was, in some sort, penitent. He had what theologians call attrition, if not the better grace of contrition. He was penitent for the consequences: it is not much to say, but it is the truth, and it is enough for the lesson. But this repentance, such as it was, found no 'place'—that is, no scope to operate for cutting off the entail of consequence. He was rejected, when he sued so earnestly for the blessing, though he sought that blessing diligently and with tears.

Brethren, it is true to human life to say that there are acts which leave no place of repentance. There are acts which the world refuses, perhaps ought not for virtue's sake, to condone. One boyish act of sin may ruin a life—in the world's sense of ruin, which is serious and awful enough. One act of sin, later on in the life, may condemn the transgressor, however bitterly penitent, to exclusion from the society of the respectable—not indeed from the

open ear and presence-chamber of Him whose name the respectable so often take in vain—still it is a tremendous penalty, that other, and it must be borne.

We are feeling our way towards the very thing said in the text. The warning of the holy writer is not against the world's frowns or edicts—his anxiety is for the soul. It is of higher things than those that he speaks when he says that the despising of the birthright must bring after it the forfeiture of the blessing, even though there be in some sense a penitence for that despising—yea, a seeking even with tears of the forfeited heritage.

In two places of this very Epistle we read of a sin unto death—such a despite done to the Holy Ghost, such a crucifying of the Son of God afresh, as precludes the hope of renewal unto repentance. The terror of the writer was for these Hebrew Christians, lest in an evil moment of cruel decision between flesh and spirit, between Christianity and Judaism, they should make the wrong choice, and all their doings and sufferings for the great Name's sake should prove to have been in vain. It was apostasy which he dreaded—and we must bear that in mind in reading him.

Nowhere in holy Scripture is any thing written

—nay, but the very contrary—of the unavailingness of repentance for forgiveness. The unpardonable sin is the sin unrepented of. The unpardonable sin is that last state of the self-hardened man, upon which the soft dews and genial sunshine of God's grace, offered so long to the unthankful and the evil, fall at last without notice on his part, without the will to believe and be saved, till in the end the very spirit of the man that is in him takes to blaspheming, and He who has knocked all these years at the closed door of the heart is finally locked and barred out, His loving purpose defeated by the soul which He willed to save.

Let no young heart in this congregation, still tender to the thought of the blood shed and of the death died for it on Calvary, conceive itself to be rejected, for any sin however heinous, for all its sins however multiplied, from the blessing which is not now for them that have not sinned, but for sinners washed white at last in the blood of the Lamb. If there be one for whom we tremble in this congregation, it is the man who says that he has not sinned, and despises the weakness that cannot stand upright. And yet, brethren, even for him, this last, we despair not—so many are the loving wiles, so many the expedients and ingenui-

ties of grace, which can win their way at last, even if it must be no longer by line upon line of precept, but by stroke upon stroke of chastisement, to the casting down of strongholds and bringing the recalcitrant rebel into the sweet captivity of Jesus Christ.

Only let us see that we refuse not Him that speaketh. There is a sin unto death—let no man go near the edge of that precipice. The path to it is through long trifling, through much dallying and much procrastinating with the voice which calls to repentance.

The cry of Esau was very piteous ; it draws tears from us now. ‘Hast thou but one blessing, my Father ? Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me ? Bless me, even me also, O my Father.’ That cry was reluctantly, grudgingly answered—an inferior blessing was found for him, but it told only of a warfare renewing itself along the ages, and an occasional opportunity of a retaliation which was no conquest.

But O, brethren, that cry, as it goes up now from a thousand sorrowful hearts to the Father of the spirits of all flesh, is never unheard, never grudgingly or reluctantly answered, when it asks, not for an earthly Canaan, and not for a human

superiority, and not for the ‘something’ and the ‘some one’ of worldly renown, but for the blessing, as Jesus Christ has interpreted it, of a soul at peace with God, a Father’s love here, and a Father’s home hereafter. I may have forfeited by my manifold sins, or, let us say, by some one terrible sin, a high place, a firstborn’s share, among saints in light—I may have made it impossible for myself ever to rise high, I say not on earth, but even among the saved—yet hast thou not reserved a blessing, the last and least be it, even for me? Not worthy to be a son, make me a hireling in Thy great household. I had rather be a doorkeeper there, than a prince in the tents of ungodliness. Me, me also, even me, take thou, O Father, within the tabernacle of Thy presence. Hast Thou not said, shalt Thou not make it good, ‘Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy : I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones’?

In that heaven, so peopled—in that presence, so revealed—with that ‘reviving,’ so effectual—‘bless me, even me also, O my Father.’



XIII.

*IMITATION OF GOD  
IN KNOWLEDGE AND POWER.*



### XIII.

#### *IMITATION OF GOD IN KNOWLEDGE AND POWER.*

##### EPHESIANS V. 1.

*(Authorized.)*

*(Revised.)*

Be ye therefore followers of  
God, as deare children.

Be ye therefore imitators of  
God, as beloved children.

THE Revised Version of the New Testament reads 'imitators' for 'followers.' The sound is not quite pleasing; for 'imitation' with us has sunk a little in usage, and suggests the idea of a tame and servile copying, whether of manner or style or dress or handwriting, which is always the mark of an inferior capacity. The word, however, is a classical, and by no means modern, English word, and it is the only one which corresponds to the Greek word before us—of which also we might say just the same disparaging things until we look a little below the surface, and take into account the connexion in which it here stands; in other words,

the Divine Person who is proposed as the Object of human and Christian imitation.

To be charged to be 'imitators of God' is open to a very different line of remark from that which suggests that imitation is displeasing. Far more reasonable would it be to say that imitation, in such a connexion, is impossible; that the command to imitate God is preposterous, illusory, or a contradiction in terms.

There are other places in Scripture where our Lord Jesus Christ is proposed to us as an Object of imitation. 'Be ye imitators of me,' St Paul says to the Corinthians, 'even as I also am of Christ.' And to the Thessalonians he writes, 'And ye became imitators of us, and of the Lord.' Indeed, wherever our Lord is spoken of as our Example, the same thought is involved. I do not recall any instance, except that before us in the text, in which the exact phrase, the imitation of God Himself, occurs in Scripture. But the thought is found even in the Old Testament, where we read, 'Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.' And it is expressed in the strongest possible way by our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount, 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.'

‘Be ye therefore imitators of God, as His dear children.’ The words open the Epistle for this third Sunday in Lent, and they seem to be words of almost incomparable beauty, opening to us a boundless vista of noble ambition and self-rewarding effort. Let us think what they say to us.

‘Imitators of God.’ It is quite obvious that it is not the Person of God that is spoken of, but the character. God Himself is practically to us the sum of His attributes, the Being who is this and this—Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent, Eternal, All-holy, the Author and Giver of all good, the Creator and Preserver, the Ruler and Father and Judge. These characteristics, however, thus stated, are altogether ‘above out of our sight’—we cannot apply the word ‘imitators,’ in any intelligible sense, to these. Some of them are not qualities at all: those that are in any sense qualities are incommunicable qualities—we cannot, in the most distant approximation, ‘attain to them.’

There are, I suppose, four prominent features of the Divine character as it was manifested in our Lord in His life below, and to some of which St Paul must be referring when He makes the imitation of God the Christian ambition and aspiration. We commonly enumerate these as holiness,

wisdom, power, and love. The first and the last of these are specially dwelt upon, here and elsewhere, as the points of possible resemblance between God and His creatures. The precept of imitation is embedded in precepts of these two kinds—love, and holiness. ‘Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you. Be ye therefore imitators of God, as His dear children; and walk in love.’ Just before and just after this precept of love stands the precept of holiness. ‘Put off the old self, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.’ ‘Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth.’ ‘Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.’ ‘Be ye imitators of God, as dear children.’ ‘All uncleanness, let it not be so much as named among you.’ ‘This ye know, that no unclean person hath any inheritance in the kingdom.’ ‘Let no man deceive you with vain words.’ ‘Have no fellowship with the works of darkness, but rather reprove them.’ The two thoughts, love and holiness, alternate with each other all through, and throw the light of an inspired interpretation upon the central precept, which is the imitation of God.

Some few years ago, speaking upon the text, ‘Walk in love,’ we tried to draw out this part of the

great subject ; and now it may not be out of place to say a few words upon the two points then left out, and to ask whether there is any such thing as an imitation of God by the Christian in the region of wisdom and in the region of power.

1. At first sight and thought, we might say, Impossible. These are among the incommunicable attributes, and nothing but presumption and almost impiety could prompt any one to connect them with the idea of imitation.

This is a serious thing, if it be so. For it has a direct tendency towards that which has done more than any other error that can be named in cutting off a whole class and kind of men, and that the most gifted of all, from God's love and service ; and further, in leading those who are in some sense religious persons to cut their own lives into two parts, of which the one is, and the other is not, directly connected with that love and service. If the imitation of God consists only in being kind and in being pure, it is impossible to represent religion as having any place or room for the exercise of the intellectual or even the practical powers : it is impossible to prevent the impression from gaining ground, that it is a thing, on the one hand, for amiable feebleness rather than for masculine

strength—on the other hand, for persons either of few temptations to the indulgence of the passions, or else inclined to that exaggeration of one sin into all sin, which finds its natural vent in a literal or virtual monasticism.

In enquiring how far the exercise of the intellect can be made in any way a part of the imitation of God, we are met certainly by many texts of Scripture which speak disparagingly of the human faculties as to their power of discovery in the region of the Divine. ‘Canst thou by searching find out God?’ ‘In the wisdom of God the world by its wisdom knew not God.’ ‘The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.’ ‘I thank Thee, O Father, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent.’ We might multiply such quotations largely both from the Old and the New Testament. And, after all, we could scarcely have proved more than all really thoughtful men admit without proof, that as to the deep things of God and the soul and eternity—certainly as to two principal questions, in ignorance of which it is miserable to live and terrible to die, the forgiveness of committed sins, and the fact and nature of a life after death—there is nothing to be reached beyond conjecture, and conjecture utterly vague and shadowy,



by any exertion of the unaided reason; that, unless God interposes by express revelation to lift the veil, we must walk in darkness and see no light.

But St Paul speaks to those to whom God has spoken, and who have heard the voice. The question is, Can *these* imitate God in wisdom? Can these expatiate in the boundless world of knowledge, whatever their particular choice in it, and feel that it is religion to do so, feel that in some sense they are growing into the likeness of God Himself in doing so?

It is written, 'No man knoweth the Son, but the Father.' They therefore who are studying the Son under the Father's teaching are in the most direct way imitating God Himself in the realm of knowledge. It is ignorance of the deepest shade, if it should not rather be called by the harder names of effrontery or of blasphemy, to deny that there is a theology—in other words, a science of God Himself—possessing every attribute of method, of substance, and of certainty, which can be claimed by any science whose field is the Cosmos of sense and matter. They who take this for their field of knowledge, make it their life's work, and labour in it (with reverence be it said) under God's tuition—and such men there are at this time in England, as

there have been everywhere in the past ages of all Christian time—are in the truest sense obeying St Paul's command in the text, 'Be ye imitators of God Himself, as dear children.'

But, brethren, the precept has a far wider compass, even in reference to the Divine attribute of wisdom. The miserable thing is, that the study of Nature, which is God's work, should ever have been, either justly or unjustly, represented as hostile to the faith of Revelation, which is God's word. Justly so represented, if the explorer of Nature set God aside in the search—unjustly, if the clamour of the religious 'tradition of the elders' was raised against discoveries of science made in good faith and with infallible proof, as though truth and the truth could ever really quarrel, or as though the Bible rightly understood could ever be the foe of unbounded growth in knowing or of dauntless candour in uttering. Faults there have been, many and grievous, on both sides, in this matter. Science has spoken unadvisedly, spoken arrogantly, spoken ignorantly, in a region where she ought to have known and acknowledged herself a stranger. Wiser men of science have known and confessed the limits within which alone they could discover; have felt and avowed the impotence of a discoverer in the world

of sense to draw inferences in the world of spirit ; have taken God Himself with them in exploring, and bent the knee of thanksgiving to Him for each success achieved in discovering. 'As dear children,' St Paul says—*so* imitate God, and then no effort of knowing can be presumptuous, and each effort of knowing will be a step taken towards resembling.

There is another region of knowing, on which a remark may be more seasonable in this particular congregation. For one passage of Scripture which speaks of God's knowledge of things, whether in the universe of Nature or in the universe of Providence, fifty passages speak of His knowledge of persons—of the characters, the actions, the thoughts, the motives, of us the fallen, sinning, and suffering children of men. It is a solemn, it is an awful, it is also a pathetic subject. For that knowledge of mankind, that knowledge of man, which is so searching and so intuitive, is no cold, distant, or theoretic knowledge—it is a knowledge of appreciation, of consideration, of feeling—a knowledge unto compassion, and a knowledge unto help.

Now the great Profession, which ought always to be foremost in our thoughts in the ministry of this place, is preeminently one of human dealing, and, in order to that, of human knowing. It is

sometimes said in disparagement of it, that it knows only the worse side of human nature ; that it is prone to inspect, and to discover, and to make merchandise of the failings and faults and sins of mankind ; that it tends to foster that cynical and contemptuous spirit, which is of all dispositions the most opposite to the teaching and the example of Jesus Christ.

Let us grant that this is a danger of the life you live, and of the work which is its bread. But never let us forget that, though it may be a risk, it is for a Christian man no necessity, of your Profession. That close contact with human nature which cannot be avoided, has also many sorrowful lessons to teach, and many softening influences to exercise. Not only does it tend to impress upon you the stern truth, of the inseparable connexion of sin (of whatever kind) with suffering—it also points out, day by day, how high principle and moral courage and gentle affection may counterwork sin and assuage suffering. It draws forth, in yourselves, the gracious impulses of admiration as well as of compassion, and shows you how your own Profession is indeed one of the three healing as well as liberal arts—aiming at the redressing of wrong and the enforcement of virtue, and looking, through all minor and lower considerations of per-

sonal gain, honour, and advancement, to the establishment upon earth of that kingdom of God, which is righteousness and peace, quietness and assurance for ever.

‘Be ye imitators of God, as dear children,’ says this to our own beloved congregation—If the proper study of mankind is man, if it is a science above all sciences save one to know well the hearts and souls of the children of men, if you have special facilities for the study of that science, and some special temptations also to turn it to an ill account; yet remember that there is a safeguard against those perils, and a guiding star towards the fulness of those advantages, in the thought that you are ‘imitators of God’ in the knowledge which is your business, and that, as He knows all, yet loves better than He knows—as He knows but to compassion-ate, and knows but to help—so also may you, as His dear children, feel for and feel with all those sorrows and all those sins which your daily work reveals to you, see in each one an added motive for thankfulness to Him who alone has made you to differ, and an added reason for that particular kind and form of Redemption which begins with atonement and goes on to sanctification—begins by bearing the sins of the world, and ends by

bringing in that new heaven and new earth wherein at last shall dwell only righteousness.

2. The time is almost spent, but I must not end without a few words upon the other half of my subject, which is, the imitation of God in power.

This would seem, like the other, to be an almost unintelligible precept, till we begin to ponder it thoughtfully. Then we must be struck with several passages of Scripture, which represent power as one of the characteristic Christian endowments—as when St Paul says, ‘Ye received not a spirit of fear, but ye received a spirit of power;’ or our Lord, ‘But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you;’ or St Paul again, ‘I can do all things—I have strength (more literally) for all things—through Christ which strengtheneth me;’ or St John, in the opening verses of the Apocalypse, ‘He hath made us kings;’ or St Paul once more, ‘All things are yours, the world, life, and death;’ or again our Lord Himself, ‘He that overcometh, to Him will I give power over the nations’—‘To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne’—‘I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me.’

We must dismiss altogether the first idea of power, as a selfish or personal ascendancy over

a multitude of subjects or inferiors. If we examine it, we shall find that the power in which we are to be imitators of God consists in two things—the one a power over ourselves, the other an influence over others, both alike due to the same cause, the ever-present help and strength of the Holy Spirit.

We are for ever misreading and miscalling power. We look for it, we seem to see it, in some form or other of the self-strength. We call a man powerful, who by the force of intellect or of eloquence or of station can overbear his opponents, enthral his hearers, or make a nation bow down to him. For ourselves, though we can do none of these things, we fancy ourselves to be making our nearest approach to power when we are rising inch by inch towards a leading place in a Profession, or when we find an ever-increasing demand upon our counsels or our activities. In all these workings of power, it would be ridiculous, it would be irreverent, to see any approach, however infinitely distant, to the imitation of God.

But it is otherwise when we come into successful conflict, however insignificant may seem to be the form of it, with God's one foe, which is the power of evil. The man who by the prayer of faith, in the strength of the Holy Spirit, triumphs

but for once over some terrible temptation—the man who, when intemperance or sensuality invites him, is enabled in the might of Jesus Christ, through an agony of struggle, to say ‘no’ to it—the man who, when an evil temper has hold of him, is enabled to shake it off and tread it underfoot, and to become instead gentle and generous and forgiving—that man is really imitating God in the attribute of power. There is nothing presumptuous and nothing pretentious in saying so, because he is actually fighting God’s one foe in the might of the one God; and though it is a small victory in itself, and may seem to have no bearing at all either upon the whole life or upon the whole cause, yet it is of the kind and nature of all victory that is worth the name—the man is in fact, just for the moment, sitting down with Christ in His throne, and breaking Christ’s foe in pieces like a potter’s vessel.

And yet once more, the imitation of God’s power in conquering a sin passes on into the imitation of God’s power in the exertion of influence. That marvellous word influence—which is, the flowing into one soul of a mysterious something out of another soul—is it not the very highest of God’s operations of power? is it not that which quickens dead men out of the sleep of death? is it



not that which changed Saul of Tarsus into the blessed Apostle and Evangelist St Paul? is it not that which even in these late days of the earth is every day bringing some new wicked rebel into the gracious obedience of Jesus Christ—just that flowing in of God's Holy Spirit into the spirit that is in the man? And is there any exertion of God's power quite so wonderful as that? Does St Paul at all exaggerate when he says that that influence of God upon the individual man brought to newness of life is not only of the same kind, but really on the same scale, with that power which He put forth when He quickened the dead body of Jesus in the rich man's new tomb, and afterwards set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places?

Now that same thing, that influence, that flowing in of a more than magical something from heart into heart and from soul into soul and from life into life, is the second instance of the imitation of God in His attribute of power. I know that it is not an imitation only—for it is an operation of God too. The man who exercises it could not do so for a single moment if he were to lose his contact with God in the doing. Still it is from the man that it comes directly. The virtue goes out from him, though it first comes into him. It is very wonderful,

how that influence, which is at once an imitation and an operation of God, does affect others. Sometimes, more often than not, the virtue goes out unperceived. Very often, most often, there is no effort, no intention, and no consciousness, on the part of the influencer. Men are more moved by that which never says, 'Behold me,' than by that which is an evident movement of the conscious personality to exert itself. 'Be ye imitators of God, as dear children'—you will be so, in this respect, if you are children. The face shines after God's converse—the man himself is not aware of it, but Aaron and the children of Israel are. Men take knowledge of the man who has been with Jesus. The power of God—that power which is at once the strongest and the most mysterious influence—acts through the human medium, the more effectually in proportion to its naturalness, to its simplicity, to its unobtrusiveness—in proportion as it breathes more absolutely that spirit of the life hidden with Christ in God, 'Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me'—'Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.'

#### XIV.

*INCOMPATIBILITY OF FAITH  
WITH ACCEPTANCE OF  
HUMAN GLORY.*



## XIV.

### *INCOMPATIBILITY OF FAITH WITH ACCEPTANCE OF HUMAN GLORY.*

JOHN V. 44.

*(Authorized.)*

How can ye beleue, which  
receiue honour one of another,  
and seeke not the honour that  
commeth from God onely?

*(Revised.)*

How can ye believe, which  
receive glory one of another,  
and the glory that *cometh* from  
the only God ye seek not?

<sup>1</sup> Some ancient authorities read  
*the only one.*

SOMETHING is lost in the Authorized Version by the introduction here of the word 'honour' in the place of 'glory.' Another loss, and a more serious one, is the substitution of the words 'from God only' for the undoubted phrase of the original, 'from the only God.' In both cases a commoner idea is presented by the Authorized Version in place of a more unusual but far more expressive.

When we think what 'glory' is in its universal Scripture use, the forthshining of light—in other

words, the manifestation of excellence, the putting forth, in visible or spiritual beauty, of a perfection inherent in the person spoken of—we see what a powerful rebuke, what a Divine irony, lies in the phrase ‘receiving glory one from another’—implying as it does that there is a claim of perfection, of an inherent and self-existent excellency, involved in that giving and in that receiving. The creature is taking to itself the very attributes of the Creator, in presuming to give, in consenting to receive, the thing in question—not ‘honour,’ which may be due—not ‘honour,’ which may be paid without any forgetfulness or any disparagement of the alone great and the alone good One—but ‘glory,’ to speak of which in connexion with any created being is to forget creation, is to deny the Fall, is to deify man and to dethrone God, and thus has in it irreverence as well as vanity, and blasphemy as well as falsehood.

The other substitution is still less excusable. ‘The honour that cometh from God only’ is by no means equivalent in English to ‘the honour that cometh from the only God.’ The very object of the expression is to say, ‘There is none good but one, that is, God.’ There is but one Person who has light to emit, who has excellence to manifest.

Any other glory must be counterfeit, must be illusory. To accept, or to profess to give it, is an affront to the majesty of God Himself as the one being who alone 'is Light,' 'to whom alone is glory.'

Thus we are brought, as the real text, to the rendering of the Revised Version, 'How can ye believe, which receive glory one of another, and the glory that cometh from the only God ye seek not?'

1. The first special thought which we see in the verse thus rendered is, the tendency which is in all of us to receive glory from one another.

This is a different thing from that of which St Paul says, 'Render honour to whom honour is due'—or St Peter, 'Honour all men.' St Paul never said, 'Give glory to whom glory is due.' Nor St Peter, 'Give glory to all men.' Honour is respect—the recognition of the claim of position, or of the claim of character, or of that humanity itself which was made in God's likeness, to our regard and consideration as such. We see the difference, when we read of the impious flattery paid to a worthless king, who was instantly smitten by the Angel because he gave not God the glory.

But, brethren, the word of the Lord is true,

that much of that which men give to, and expect from, one another, is, being examined, not honour, but glory. It is the ascription of an excellence of some sort, not derived but inherent, to the being which was created, the being which has sinned, the being which must die. It is not thought respectful, it would be felt not to be courteous, to qualify praise by such considerations. We should call it cant or hypocrisy to remind or to be reminded of God as the Author and Giver of that strength or of that wisdom which makes a man a sagacious statesman or an eloquent orator. We feel it as a disparagement of his merit, as a distinct diminution of our applause, to introduce one suggestion of indebtedness or of derivation, even as to the ultimate source of all greatness and goodness in the gift of God. Such reflexions may be suitable in sermons or books of devotion—they cannot be carried with us, even as qualifying considerations, in our contact and converse with men.

We ‘receive’ this glory. If we do not seek, we accept it. Nothing rises within us to repudiate or to resent it. We allow the ascription to us of that which cannot be ours. The thought, ‘What hast thou that thou didst not receive?’ though it lies of course on our theological shelf, is not a welcome



thought when it presents itself as a monitor. We cannot divest ourselves of the feeling, though it does not put itself into words, that there is some merit in the being successful, or in the possession of such and such gifts of ability or address. We have borrowed the word 'talent' from one of our Lord's great Parables—but we have divorced it from its context, as the memento of an absent yet present Lord, who distributed to His servants, bade them to 'occupy' as for Him, and prepared them for a strict and solemn account.

The subject is a common one, and we have not a new word to say upon it. Yet it can never be unseasonable, in any congregation, to invite men to look into the matter for themselves, how much of their daily life is lived in that mutual glorifying of which the text speaks. It cannot be gainsaid by thoughtful persons that the question, What will the world say? is, in one form or another, constantly recurring; that the reference of every thing said and done to its effect upon others, to the impression it will make upon those who form our world, and to its reaction upon ourselves in the shape of praise or blame, of popularity or dislike, is at least a temptation substantial and formidable; and that, in various degrees, it does present itself

as a real hindrance to the *other* reference of everything, to the approval of God, which, as Christians, and even as men, we all admit to be the right thing and the alone justifiable.

2. In contrast with the habit of receiving glory one from another, our Lord sets before us this alternative—the ‘seeking of glory from the only God’—or, as some ancient authorities read it, ‘from the only One.’

It seems strange, after defining glory as the manifestation of excellence, to speak of seeking it from God as something which He can communicate. We have called it an inalienable property of God Himself, to possess that light of which glory is the forthshining. And yet our Lord speaks of seeking from God that forthshining in ourselves.

It is indeed a frequent thought and saying of Scripture. It is involved in that expression, ‘the glory that shall be revealed in us.’ St Paul speaks of this glory as outweighing beyond comparison the sufferings of the present. And St Peter calls himself ‘a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.’ Thus that seeking of glory which the text speaks of might be understood to be a living in the constant effort to attain the future inheritance.

But we do not so read it. 'The glory which cometh from the only God' is the antithesis and alternative of the glory received now from one another. And the moment that God is seen as the Giver of glory, that moment glory may be predicated even of the creature. The impious and blasphemous thing is that ascription of an independent and separate excellence to the thing made, which is the self-flattery and the mutual flattery reproved in the former clause. But to seek the recognition of God Himself, for that excellence of which He is the Giver, is no blasphemy and no impiety, but the lawful and Christian ambition of those whose life is hidden with Christ in God.

Brethren, the life to which Christ calls us is no tame or spiritless or unenterprising monotony. It is a seeking of glory. It is the ambition (as St Paul says) to be accepted. It is an aspiration far above any applause that earth and the world wot of. It is the desire, it is the pursuit, it is the appetite, of glory ; in other words, of that approval of God Himself, which attends upon each several exercise of that Christ-like mind, of that God-like character, which comes of living the life unseen, the life of union with God Himself in Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. Where this life is, there is an

elevation at once above all the lying world-worship of which St John in his Apocalypse has written that withering scathing description, 'All the world wondered after the beast,' which is the world itself; yea, 'worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? And all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, received the mark of the beast,' which is the world, 'on their right hand, or on their foreheads; and no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast,' which is the world, 'or (at least) the number of his name.'

Brethren, if this ambition is new to us, let us begin to feel it at once. If hitherto we have been, consciously or unconsciously—for either is possible—receivers of glory one from another, let us give room and lodgment from to-day to this seeking of glory from God to which Jesus Christ calls us. There must be a beginning of it in a few experiments. If hitherto we have allowed the thought of other people, what they will say and what they will think, to come in perpetually, creating side-looks and back-thoughts and low motives in every act and word, even of duty, even of kindness, even of charity, even of devotion—spoiling our best and profaning our holiest, till there is nothing left of

either but an empty hollow hypocrisy—let us make trial now of the very opposite of all this. Let us begin to do little acts of good which no one can possibly discover—not allowing even the left hand to know what the right hand doeth—shutting and barring behind us the door of the chamber in which we pray—fighting in secret some sin which no one suspects us of—forming in secret some good habit which has hitherto falsely been ascribed to us—and thus, were it but in some one small way, seeking a glory which comes only from the only God, till we can carry the thought with us always and everywhere, referring nothing any longer to the world, everything henceforward to a Father who is and who seeth in secret.

3. There is still one thought in the text—the connexion of faith with the two habits in question. ‘How can ye believe,’ which receive the one glory, and will not seek the other?

(1) How can ye believe, which receive the one glory? The answer was obvious enough then. The world of that time was against the acceptance of Christ. However it might be with the common people, who are said to have heard Him gladly, with the scribes and Pharisees at all events it was a question of life and death, as religious teachers,

to refuse allegiance to Jesus Christ. They sat in Moses' seat, and Christ called them blind men and hypocrites.

But this is gone by. Is there still any real practical connexion between the habit of receiving glory one of another, and the impossibility of believing?

The acknowledgment of Jesus Christ, in general terms, as our Saviour, is not now, as it was then, incompatible with the mutual glorifying. On the contrary, it is the open denial of Him which would be the incompatible thing. How long it may be so, we know not. The world is moving rapidly towards the toleration of a modified infidelity, or even of a decorously reticent Atheism. It may be—if we read Scripture aright, it must needs be—that, before the time of the end, a new licence will be claimed for, and accorded to, a more open and insolent godlessness. At present there is just this to be said for the 'many antichrists' of the generation, that, if they consulted only the praise of men, they would probably hold their peace.

But when our Lord speaks of 'believing,' He means the real thing so called, not the nominal. And of the real believing it is always true that it is

impossible in combination with the 'mutual glorifying' of this text.

To believe is to realize the invisible. To believe is to see with the soul, as nature sees with the body. Is not this the direct opposite of the habit of mind here before us? To receive glory one of another is to be deaf and blind to all but sense and time. To receive glory one of another is to represent the present as the whole of being; is to say one to another, to say first of all in the ear of the self-man, 'Yea, hath God said, There is a world above and beyond and within this world, whose least interests are more important than this world's greatest, whose one day is as a thousand years to the whole duration of earth, whose smallest joys and sorrows outweigh the whole universe of cares and riches and pleasures of this life? We know better—we are they that ought to speak and to be listened to—all else may be postponed, may be made light of, may be looked down upon—the world's smile and the world's frown, these are the vital things—when we find a convenient season, we can call in the other.'

How then can ye believe, which receive glory one of another? It is to combine two things mutually contradictory: it is to live two opposite

lives in one : it is to serve two masters : faith and sight are at war, there is no daysman between them, who can lay his hand upon both.

(2) Finally, how can ye believe, who seek not the other glory ? Is the answer difficult ? Not to those who know what it is to believe—not to those who know not.

If faith were the careless indolent thing which the world makes it—a languid acquiescence in a string of articles, historical some of them, doctrinal some of them, utterly theoretical and unintelligible some of them—it might indeed lie apart by itself, silent and uncomplaining, while the real life went its way and did its business. But the faith which Christ speaks of, the faith for which the soul is athirst, the faith for lack of which the world itself is a wilderness, is a thing which presupposes a search and a seeking, a feeling after, till it finds, the God in whom the man himself lives and moves and has his being. It is the half-unconscious consciousness that there is a ‘glory,’ which God, the alone good and great and glorious, destines for, and can alone bestow upon, His created, fallen, and banished ones—it is the instinctive feeling, the one survival of the original image and likeness, that somewhere far away, in what memory seems to recall as the



home of the race, there dwells One whom I cannot help calling my Father, One who may perhaps, all this time of my self-exile, be yearning after me as His son—it is this which faith takes for granted, it is this to which faith makes appeal: if there were not this in us before faith spoke, she would speak into sealed ears and dead hearts if she spoke at all: and therefore, if there is no idea of, and no longing and no searching for this glory, there can be no faith—for faith is the laying hold upon the hand which is stretched forth to guide me to the ‘glory,’ and if I see no beauty in it that I should desire it, in vain does Christ speak, in vain has Christ died for me.

‘How can ye believe?’ We are apt to think of faith as a submissive suitor, having nothing but smiles and caresses for a multitude that may at their pleasure hear or forbear. It is good for us now and then to be reminded that there is an aspect not of dignity alone but of difficulty, not of difficulty alone but of impossibility, which the faith of Jesus Christ presents to certain classes and characters of mankind. It is good for us to be sternly admonished from time to time, that there are states of mind incapable of believing, even though ‘incapable’ means the very opposite of ‘therefore excusable.’

There is an insolence as well as an indolence in our treatment of the Gospel, requiring the tone rather of severity than of allurements—the thought rather of an unattainable height and an unapproachable glory than of a perpetual standing without and knocking at closed doors for entrance. ‘How can ye believe?’—and yet the Gospel may be true all the time, and you responsible for rejecting it—‘How can ye believe?’ with your worldly lives and ambitious projects and covetous practices—‘How can ye believe?’ whose only idea of glory is that which sinning dying men like yourselves give and take away as it pleases them—who have no heart and no thought for the glory which the only God gives to them that seek Him—to them who feel that His favour is life, and that at His right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

‘*How* can ye believe?’ Lord, by Thy grace convincing us of the shame and the sin of this earth-bounded, time-bounded, sight-bounded existence—this miserable creature-worship, world-worship, self-worship—and drawing up our thoughts to that clearer sky, that brighter heaven, that more glorious Presence, in which Angels that have not sinned, and spirits washed white in the blood of the Lamb, worship Thee with a holy worship, and are made full of joy with Thy countenance.

XV.

*OUR LAMPS ARE GOING OUT.*



## XV.

### OUR LAMPS ARE GOING OUT.

MATTHEW XXV. 8.

(*Authorized.*)

Our lampes are ||gone out.

|| *Or, going out.*

(*Revised.*)

Our <sup>1</sup>lamps are going out.

<sup>1</sup> *Or, torches.*

A VIGOROUS attempt has been made to represent this Parable as describing different degrees of grace rather than the vital difference between true and false Christians. On this supposition the point lies in the vividness or dulness of expectancy with which different Christians await the second Advent of Christ and the glories that shall follow. The exclusion spoken of is a temporary not a final exclusion—an exclusion, perhaps, from the triumphs of the Millennial reign, not from the final blessedness of the saints in light.

Those who take a different view of the Millen-

nium itself cannot be expected to adopt an interpretation which presupposes an earthly reign of Christ and His people preparatory to the last consummation. But indeed a simple and natural treatment of the language and imagery of the Parable is utterly inconsistent with such an interpretation. 'Five of them were wise, and five were foolish.' 'Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But He answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.' It is the very expression of another passage, which admits of no two applications, 'When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and He shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets. But He shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.'

The Parable before us is of the same general intention as the Parables (for example) of the Tares and of the Wedding Garment. All speak of the presence of true and false, real and nominal, within the Gospel kingdom—though each has its

own special point which it shares with no other. The point of the present Parable lies in the words 'wise' and 'foolish.' The word for 'wise' is not that which stands for intellectual wisdom. It is indeed neither of the two words combined in our Lord's saying, 'Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent'—where 'wise and intelligent' should in strictness perhaps be the rendering. The wisdom here spoken of is practical, not intellectual—the 3rd verse gives the reason for the words 'wise' and 'foolish' in the 2nd—'for the foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.' The wisdom specified is that of prudence or providence, shown in making provision for all contingencies—in this instance, for the possibility of long delay in the arrival of the event or the person looked for. There was expectation in all the ten—there was providence only in half of them. What is more remarkable, there was drowsiness, there was slumber, in the case of all, and no express blame is attached to it. It is a beautiful illustration not only of our Lord's naturalness in describing, but also of our Lord's mercifulness in allowing for nature. He who knew the sleep of fatigue, He who once, in the tumult of the elements which terrified

His companions, was Himself 'in the hinder part of the ship asleep on a pillow,' makes it not the point for rebuke in this Parable, that long watching, even in spiritual things, brings with it weariness, and that weariness, even in spiritual things, will sometimes fall on sleep. The wise and the unwise are here alike and equal in this respect. The difference is strongly marked between them, but it lies neither in the expectancy on the one hand, nor in the drowsiness on the other. It lies in the providence and the improvidence which had made or not made preparation for unforeseen contingencies and for distresses and necessities growing out of them.

Commentators who think it their duty to interpret each figure of a Parable, where our Lord Himself has not done so for us, find considerable difficulty in this provision of oil—knowing that, as it was of old with the manna, so is it always with the supply of God's grace, that it is for the day now running its course, and cannot be kept over till the morrow. We shall not try to spiritualize each particular of the imagery. It is enough for us to catch the point of the Parable, and we cannot err in declaring it to be the enforcement of that grace of spiritual prevision and providence, which lays its account for every sort and kind of emer-



gency, and which, even while it sleeps, keeps the heart waking, so that it need never be afraid of any surprise from earth, heaven, or hell—nay, even when the last call comes, and comes suddenly, shall only have to rise and trim its lamp, secure of the needful supply, secure of the open door and the abundant entrance.

It is not so with the improvident five. They have shared the expectation, they have shared the protracted watching, of their comrades—the latter have shared with them the natural drowsiness and slumber of the delay. The contrast is seen, not in the sleep, but in the waking. While the provident sleepers have but to rise and trim their lamps—the work of a few moments, and abundantly provided for by the supply of oil in the vessels taken with the lamps—the improvident awake to find their lamps expiring, and to become conscious of the fatal effect of a short-sightedness which it is too late to repair. ‘Our lamps are going out’—whence now can we replenish them? In their embarrassment they make application to the wise. ‘Give us of your oil.’ But the supply which is sufficient leaves nothing over—and the only possible is now the desperate counsel, to ‘go and buy.’ Meanwhile the door is shut—and the entreaty for late entrance

is met by the cold and stern repulse, 'Verily I say unto you, I know you not.'

No Parable ever read itself more spontaneously into its designed lesson. And if it is so with the general import, certainly it is so with the brief clause which has been read to us as the text, 'Our lamps are gone out'—or as the Revised Version rightly gives it, with the margin of the Authorized, 'Our lamps are going out.' This expresses far more vividly, far more touchingly, the exact crisis intended. The utter extinction has not taken place, but must take place before the arrival of the supreme moment—it is just the agony of the dying, not the sullen stillness of the death.

'Our lamps are going out.'

A sensational use might be made of the saying. But we want to let it sink down quietly into the heart. It is a suitable subject for a season of quiet reflexion, for an hour of holy thought, like this. 'Our lamps are going out.' We need not be punctilious any longer about the exact original meaning of the figure of the lamps and the figure of the oil—of the going out to meet, and of the arrival of, the Bridegroom—of the expectation which was common to the ten, or of the sleep in which the wise shared with the foolish. We must bring all

this home now, and to do so we must adapt the figure.

‘Our lamps are going out.’

It is a critical moment. Each day is indeed a crisis. Each day is a trial, each day is a judgment, for each one. ‘His eyes behold, His eyelids try, the children of men.’ There is not a day in which we are not fighting decisive battles, or else running away from them. Each word spoken is the result of a choice. There is just time, before each one, to choose and refuse. No word is so ‘idle’ but it either condemns or justifies. We select words, when we might name actions, because words, as our Lord teaches us, even more than acts, come straight and direct out of the treasure, good or evil, which is the heart of the man. We are always deciding, between two different or two opposite kinds both of speech and of conduct—and the crisis, or decision, which is in this sense our own, is, in another sense, God’s upon us. We decide, and God judges, every hour—and the hour is the specimen, and in some sense the epitome, of the crisis which is the life.

But there is a crisis within the crisis. There are days and days, hours and hours, moments and moments. Probably the busy memory of many of

us—never more busy than in God's House—recalls periods, very brief periods, of the life, which have been turning-points of the being. Almost consciously, sometimes, we have had to settle for ourselves of what colour and complexion the rest of the life shall be—of what colour and complexion, certainly, as to its occupation and circumstance—but perhaps even morally, even religiously, as towards God and man—even eternally, as in the foreview of hell or heaven. There are such decisions. Before the first great sin—under the first great attack of the infidel—at particular emergencies demanding a Yes or No of truth or falsehood—it is no exaggeration to say that the scales at such times are quivering before us, and we have to throw into one or the other the very life of the life. At midnight there was a cry made, and we must go out to meet it.

It is then that we make discoveries. The lamp is in the hand—the lamp of Christianity as the national religion, of Christianity as the faith in which we were born, in virtue of which we have taken part in many Services, for which we can give many plausible reasons, from which it would shock us to be told that we should ever openly apostatize. The lamp is in the hand—the lamp of creeds and

forms, of a general impression of the truth of the Gospel, and a general expectation of death, judgment, and eternity. But now, on a sudden, the lamp is wanted. It will make the whole difference whether it is bright or dim, whether it is trimmed or neglected, whether it is going out or shining clearly. If it is only the lamp that I brought out with me at the beginning, utterly regardless of the time that I might be kept waiting, simply taking it for granted that it would hold out through the necessary period whatever that might be, it will not avail me for this midnight cry and this sudden waking. Improvidence is my description—‘five of them were wise, and five were foolish—for they took no oil with them.’ Now it shall be seen that, to be of any use, the Gospel must have been made my own by a sort of forethought and providence quite different from that assuming and presuming of its truth which brings a man to Church and keeps a man from blaspheming—quite different from the being a Christian because I was born so, or because every one around me is so, or (for the less honest reason still) because I am afraid to enquire and unwilling to know.

Brethren, prudence, not in the cold, unlovely sense of caution, but in the grand original of which

‘prudence’ is the contraction, ‘providence,’ is a spiritual grace, and it is the grace of which this Parable tells. The prospect before each one, when he goes forth to his work and to his labour—the prospect before each one, when he looks out, in the morning of life, upon the day of which death is the evening—is a long as well as a varied prospect, and he has to consider how he shall last through (if that were all) these protracted hours of a wearisome waiting. Will the Gospel light last me through this long day? Has it the permanence, has it the copiousness, has it the adaptability, which the threescore and ten or fourscore years, with all their varieties of youth and age, of toil and resting, of joy and grief, of companionship and solitude, of temptation and weakness, will demand of it if it is to see me through them? It will do this, on one condition—that it is grasped betimes as the revelation of a Person, not as the definition of a thing. If it brings me into living sympathy, into loving communion, with One who has me in His constant keeping, and is concerned to be to me all that I need for safety, for comfort, for everlasting blessedness; then indeed I shall have not only the lamp of a temporary brightness, but with it the oil of a perpetual replenishing—not only a system of doc-

trine and worship which I can read in a book or share with a society of living dying men, but a faith and a hope and a love which I can give whole and undivided, give without idolatry and know that I shall not be ashamed, to One who was before time and inhabits eternity, One who loves with an everlasting love, and saves with an everlasting salvation.

This is what is meant by the grace of prudence, when Jesus Christ throws upon it the light of His Gospel. This foresight, this prevision, of the immense, the infinite future—this surrender of the whole man to God, on the basis of the Father, the Saviour, the Comforter, revealed in the Gospel—the determination to live and to die in this personal faith—is the taking of the oil with the lamps, which makes, and which is, the difference between the folly of the foolish in this Parable and the wisdom of the wise. This providence shall make you independent of the passing mood, of the varying spirits, of the changing circumstance, of the many false alarms, of the long waiting and the hope often deferred. For it builds not on the shifting sand of feeling, but on the impregnable rock of truth—it never counted itself anything, but only knew in whom it had believed.

‘Our lamps are going out.’

It is the exceeding bitter cry of the improvident Christian, when he finds himself face to face with a great temptation, and feels how far stronger is the power of evil than anything which he has to set against it. In vain, he says to himself, in vain all that intellectual assent and all that formal worship which I imagined to be the beginning and ending of the faith of a Christian. As tow when it toucheth the fire are the restraining bands of such a Christianity—real temptation to real sinning needs something real to cope with it—‘oil in the vessels with the lamps,’ this is the one thing needful, and this one thing I lack.

‘Our lamps are going out.’ It is the exceeding bitter cry of the improvident Christian, when he finds himself for the first time in the presence of a living and speaking and proselytizing infidelity, demanding of him a reason for the faith that is in him, and quick to descry the weakness and the shallowness and the confusion which alone can make answer to its challenge. O, if I could say then, ‘This and that thou hast against me—much that is substantial in the things that are seen, much that is unexpected and much that is assailable in the revelation of the invisible—many things in Scripture hard to be understood, some things which,



not reason alone, but conscience, frets under as unaccountable—yet there is One revealed therein who satisfies all my wants, heals all my infirmities, and forgives all my sins ; I know Him with a personal knowledge, and though He hides Himself yet I can trust Him ; not if all argument were against Him, that human logic can state or human rhetoric embellish, not even then would I give Him up ; for these so many years I have served Him, He has comforted me in sorrow and strengthened me in my weakness, and in that shield of a conscious experience, true to the Revelation which I read of Him in the Bible, I find myself able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked’—amid flaming worlds and dissolving elements, this if I could say, still might I lift up my head. For lack of this personal answer, this witness of the Spirit with my spirit, this evidence from within, corresponding to the evidence, known and read of all men, of lives sanctified and deaths comforted by the faith of Jesus—for lack of this personal answer, I cower and flee before the atheist and the blasphemer—even because I cannot say the word, ‘I believe, and therefore speak.’

‘ Our lamps are going out.’

There is a day before each one of us, which, if

reason and thought be continued to it, must try to the uttermost the firmness and constancy of the man. It is a day with which long years of participation in the services of the Church, its music and ritual, its reading and preaching, have but a faint and distant connexion. The mention of death in the ears of the living is but a tentative and conjectural mention—speaker and hearer alike feel it to be so—and we may well suppose, that, when we come to die, the experience itself will be utterly unlike anything predicted or anticipated concerning it; nay, that we shall find that then for the first time is there either reality to us, or substance, or meaning, in the name. But can we not all feel already these three things—first, that it must require something very real to give us any help whatever in venturing that step into the invisible; secondly, that it can be only by miracle if we find that help or that reality in anything then for the first time apprehended; and thirdly, that of all agonies *that* must be the greatest, which should vent itself then in the cry, ‘My lamp is going out’? To feel that we have walked all our life in a vain shadow—calling Christ Lord, yet never knowing Him, and never doing any one thing because of Him—worshipping we knew not what, because never

‘stirring up ourselves (as a Prophet has written) to lay hold upon Him’—how terrible! To have to turn then to the bystanders, and say, ‘Give me of your oil’—and to receive the only possible answer, ‘Go and buy’—to have to be reminded of the dying robber and the marvellous grace vouchsafed to him, though we cannot ignore the fact that his case and ours are diametrically opposite in every antecedent and in every circumstance of the spiritual state—to have to summon all the expiring energies of the failing heart to turn (if it might be so) into sudden reality those words of entreaty which have been drained of all virtue by a long talking of them in vain—how terrible! Is there not motive as well as awe in the thought? Shall we not try, while the life is yet strong in us, to mean that prayer which is mighty with God and prevails—to lay hold upon the hope set before us, while it may guide us, steadily and safely, towards first, then at last into, the haven where we would be?

‘Our lamps are going out.’

It may be, it may well be, amongst so many—in the sight of Him who seeth in secret—that there is some one here bitterly bewailing himself for a decay in him of that light of life, in which once he

thought himself walking humbly and peacefully. In what words can we counsel him—with what earnestness of persuasion—yet not we, but the grace that alone can—to trim the expiring lamp while opportunity is still ‘called to-day’? It is written of Jesus Christ, that He ‘quenches not the smoking flax’—plead with Him that gracious saying, and pray Him to make it good to *you*.

XVI.

*NECESSITY OF THE  
RESURRECTION.*



## XVI.

### *NECESSITY OF THE RESURRECTION.*

#### ACTS II. 24.

*(Authorized.)*

Whom God hath raised vp,  
having loosed the paines of  
death : because it was not pos-  
sible that hee should be holden  
of it.

*(Revised.)*

Whom God raised up, having  
loosed the pangs of death : be-  
cause it was not possible that he  
should be holden of it.

SEVEN weeks ago this same voice had been saying, 'I know not the man.' What had wrought the change? Two things—the sight of the Risen Lord, and the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

We have the history of both these. There had been an interval of forty days between the Resurrection and the Ascension, during which our Lord was both proving the reality of His life after death, and also accustoming men still in the body to the conception of a resurrection life. There had been a briefer interval, of ten days, between Ascension

and Pentecost, during which the disciples were simply tarrying in the holy city until they should be endued with power from on high.

That second pause, like the former, was now ended. He who speaks in the text was a man set free in heart and tongue, first by faith, then by inspiration—first by absolute conviction of the truth of the Resurrection, then by a self-evidencing presence within him of the Holy Spirit—to speak before rulers and multitudes that which he had himself both seen and felt. Addressing himself to a great concourse of people brought together either by the sound or the rumour (it is not quite clear which) of the miracle of wind and fire which accompanied the spiritual baptism, he is able to speak with undoubting certainty of events which once had been to him as idle tales, and can pass by one step from the mention of the life and the death of Jesus of Nazareth—as to which he can call his witnesses from the multitude before him—to an equally brief, equally simple, and equally positive assertion, on his own part, of the Resurrection of the crucified Lord—its agency, its meaning, and its cause. ‘Whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it.’



I. There is something very striking, something too strongly sustaining, in the brevity of that statement, 'Whom God raised up.' All the Gospel lies in it. St Peter, who knew Jesus well, who saw Him die, who thought that death the shipwreck of hope, who no more expected the Resurrection than did Caiaphas or Pilate, was so convinced now of the fact that he spends no words upon it, by way of apology or of palliation, but just states it and leaves it and goes his way. We know the steps and processes of that new conviction. He who knew Him living, he who had seen Him betrayed, crucified, dying, dead, believed himself as confidently to have seen Him again and again alive after His Passion. There was no expectation of this, there was no motive (but the very contrary) for asserting it. It involved the loss of all earthly gain and repose and comfort. It involved the sacrifice of the life, first in witnessing, then in martyrdom. It was no passing fancy, it was no idle ghost-seeing, it was no illusion of the senses, it was no dream of a high-wrought imagination—it was something strong enough, sober enough, important enough, to live and to die for. For it Peter did live and die—and, being dead, he still speaks of it. 'God,' he says here,

‘raised Him up.’ God, he elsewhere says, ‘by that resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead regenerated us to a lively hope, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away.’

St Peter thus spoke and thus wrote—nor does infidelity itself deny that from that faith of a few common men in the fact of the Resurrection results followed of which it is no exaggeration to say that they have affected the history of the world, that they have formed and reformed characters, that they have introduced new modes of thought and life, that they have quietly revolutionized politics and morals, that they have covered the face of the earth with institutions of charity and piety, and that, in proportion as they have had free course and consistent influence, their working has been all for good, all impartial men being witnesses.

The only question therefore is, whether in this one instance a fancy, an infatuation, a delusion, has been, not the ally, not the comrade, not the accidental companion, but the parent and the originator of all this good—this beauty, this virtue, this blessing. Is it so, that in this one instance evil and good have been confederates—evil, in the form of a deception—good, in the form of philanthropy and piety? Those who believe in a living God—

a God of holiness, a God of truth, not to say a God of love—feel it to be so much more improbable that *this* should be, than that a God of power should have wrought what from its unusualness, from its uniqueness, men call a miracle, that they pass through the faith of the witnesses to the truth of the fact, and find no violence done to their understanding, while they find all satisfaction given to their conscience, by accepting, and echoing, and seeking to live by, St Peter's words in the text, 'Him God raised up.' If the dead man revives in the sepulchre, if he comes forth in newness of life, certainly the agency must be Divine. Hand and foot bound with graveclothes cannot move, cannot animate, themselves. Hence the cogency of that appeal of Jesus Himself again and again to His Resurrection from death as the one sign and seal of His mission. Only God can quicken the dead, and God will not lend His attribute to the authentication of an imposture and a lie.

Brethren, there are times when the question of Christ's Resurrection assumes a practical importance, utterly different from that playing with sacred names in the way of clever or original handling, of which all times, and our own times preeminently, have had enough and to spare. 'Even so them

also which sleep in Jesus'—those who (as the Greek says) were laid on sleep 'through' and by means of Jesus—by the help, that is, of the sweet and sustaining thoughts which cluster around His personality—'will God bring with Him,' with Jesus—is that true? If it is, we can feel it good to have been born—we can lay our best beloved in the grave with sure and certain hope—all is endurable in the present, all is blessed in the future far off or near. But St Paul himself, in the firmness of his own conviction, is not afraid to suggest a terrible alternative. 'If Christ be not risen, then they also that have fallen asleep in Him have perished.' They have fallen asleep on the faith of a lie—a lie about God—yea a lie which divided God's own attributes between God and—a man.

How delightful to turn back to the strong impregnable rock of St Peter's testimony, who first lived for, and then fell asleep in Christ—'Him God raised up.'

St Peter adds two words to his testimony, both worthy of pondering.

2. 'Having loosed the pains of death.' Little lies on the surface—we read it as involved in the raising up—or as merely adding to it the subordi-

nate reflexion, that the power of death, shown in the sufferings which led up to it, was broken, in that instance, by the rising.

A closer study shows us the word 'pangs,' the sufferings as of a woman in her travail, as St Peter's phrase and thought. God, when He raised Jesus, loosed, or gave relief from, the birth-pangs of death. That death had a birth in it. 'A woman, when she is in travail, hath sorrow...but, when she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.'

Some great interpreters have read the saying as though it were 'death's birth-pangs'—as though death itself, in exercising its power upon Jesus, were travelling in pain with a mighty birth, to be death's own eventual destroyer. God by the resurrection of Jesus loosed, or ended, the travail of that last enemy with its own conqueror. The plea for this interpretation is, that it was not resurrection, but death itself, which ended Christ's sufferings—the pains of death were ended for Him when He said, 'It is finished,' and gave up the ghost. This may be an over-refinement upon the Apostle's image—which may rather be taken to mean generally, that, though the actual suffering ended with the dying, it was yet resurrection which gave the

deathblow to the dying. 'O death, I will be thy plagues—O grave, I will be thy destruction,' is a prophecy of Resurrection. And thus God may be spoken of in the text as having 'broken the pains of death' when He reversed death itself by raising the Sufferer.

But the central thought must not be lost sight of. The death of Jesus had life in it. His death-pangs were birth-pangs too. They had in them the Church—they had in them the Christian. When God loosed the pangs, He brought to life the offspring. It is the equivalent parable to His own in which He spoke of the unsown grain of corn as a solitary, and of the sowing as a sort of dying necessary to the fruit-bearing. Even so—such is the explanation—while Christ was unsown, while Christ lived and moved and had His being as a man in flesh and blood, teaching, healing, ministering, He was alone. There might be companionship with a few of the living, there might be affection, there might be (to a limited extent) even sympathy. But that peculiar relationship which is between Christ and His people, that which makes them His spiritual offspring, the fruit of His soul's travail in the sin-bearing, this there could not be without or before His dying—that death was atone-

ment, that death therefore was their life. The death-pangs were birth-pangs. Out of them sprang the immortal being, of which the faith and the love of Christ are not only inseparable attributes, but the very characteristic and essence of the new life.

Brethren, there are times for all of us—I had almost said, but I will not quite say it, I *hope* there are times for all of us—when the thought of the death-pangs of Jesus as birth-pangs becomes a very crisis and agony of the man. So many of us as mean the words of the Church Confession, ‘I have left undone those things which I ought to have done, and I have done those things which I ought not to have done,’ must surely feel also that the one hope for persons so described must lie in something quite apart from those vague ideas of mercy and goodness, which in unawakened souls differ but by a shade from the ‘Tush, Thou God carest not for it’ of the libertine and profligate of the Psalmist. The Gospel as our Lord defined it was a Gospel of the forgiveness of sins. It was to be preached in His name—not only as proclaimed on His authority, but as grounded in His sacrifice. If this is true, we can still go about, run the round of duty, fulfil our day of work and speech and

human converse, in great humility indeed, as not only dust and ashes, but sinners, conscious sinners, great sinners, some of us chief sinners, yet with a well-assured hope of pardon and peace and grace. If this is not true—if the death-pangs of Jesus were not birth-pangs by reason of that definite bearing of our sins and carrying of our sorrows, of which Prophets, Apostles, and Evangelists tell—then I do not see what there is, for the self-accusing, self-condemning, self-despairing children of men, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, during the days of their sojourning, and a horrible leap out of darkness into darkness when the inscrutable change comes.

3. St Peter adds a reason for the resurrection—or, more exactly, for the loosing of the death-pangs—‘because it was not possible that He should be holden of it.’ Many reasons might be given, have been given in hymns, commentaries, and Sermons, for this impossibility. The Divinity of Christ is one of these. We can all feel the force of it. But in truth the Divinity of Christ never died. The Second Person of the Godhead, *as such*, never saw death. That ‘equality of being with God’ of which St Paul writes to the Philippians, was not lost, it was but in abeyance, while Jesus of Naza-



reth, in whom the Holy Ghost dwelt not by measure, was sojourning and ministering and suffering below. Persons who speculate upon what might have been if something else, which was, had not been, may pursue such enquiries into the possible and the impossible—it is enough for us that St Peter explains himself here as to his use of the word, and makes it clear that he speaks of the plain prediction of God in Holy Scripture, which it was impossible that history, the key of prophecy, should contradict.

‘It was not possible that he should be holden of death’—because it is of Him that David speaks when he says, ‘Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine holy one to see corruption.’

St Peter does not of course say that there was no sense in which the Psalmist might write those words of himself. It would be a rash and ignorant assertion, that David was not even *thinking* of himself when he wrote this prediction. But St Peter has three things to say of it—(1) that literally it was not true of David—his soul is still in Hades, the place of the blessed dead—his flesh did see corruption: (2) that, wheresoever in Scripture expressions are used, by men moved of the Holy Ghost, transcending the possibilities of the human,

—as where the word ‘everlasting’ is predicated of a dynasty, or the word ‘universal’ is predicated of a dominion—there is ever in the background a Messianic reference—a prediction, in other words, concerning Him who, not being man only, can fulfil and exhaust terms necessarily limited and partial in their application to the merely human: (3) that such is the reality of Divine Inspiration, the breath that breathes in Scripture, the Spirit that moves and stirs the souls of God’s ‘utterers’ in what they truly speak in His name, that there is a necessity in the nature of things that what they so speak and write should come true—consequently, that, if David, for example, speaking by the Spirit of God, said, ‘My soul shall not be left in Hades—my flesh shall not see corruption’—inasmuch as this was not literally verified in him, it must have had an intentional (though to himself perhaps indiscoverable) reference to Christ—and, if so, that it formed a necessity, a law binding events, that it should be verified, literally and exactly, in Him that should come, the Christ of God, whensoever the time should arrive for His manifestation by Incarnation on the stage of the world. ‘Let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is

with us unto this day. Therefore, being a prophet ...he spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell, neither His flesh did see corruption.' Therefore, there being this prophecy written on the Scripture page, unexhausted and inexhaustible by any human experience, God loosed for Jesus the birth-pangs of death, because it was not possible, consistently with God's Word and God's Inspiration, that He should be permanently holden of it.

Brethren, there are times—may I say it yet once more? when the necessities and the impossibilities created by Holy Scripture start into great reality and into great prominence in the experiences of this being. It was not possible that death should keep permanent possession of the dead body, or Hades of the separate soul, of Christ, because, a thousand years before, David, one of God's utterers, had written a particular thing concerning Him. It was only known to concern Him by its being proved by the event not to be fulfilled in David. That inapplicability in the letter to its human writer became a binding compulsion for its fulfilment in Christ. What a marvellous incidental testimony to the vitality of Scripture! Not, you observe, in its first meaning or in its obvious appli-

cation. We have to wait for history to unlock prophecy. We have to wait to see, for example, whether David *did* speak of himself. God *might* have raised David before he had seen corruption—just as He exempted Enoch and Elijah from the common doom of dying. But when David died and was buried, and the third day came and the third year and the third century, and still his sepulchre was there among the sepulchres of his descendants, then it was seen that that prophecy of the 16th Psalm was Messianic—it lay there waiting for fulfilment, and constituting a new necessity concerning Him that should come not to destroy but to fulfil both the Law and the Prophets.

A strong caution is here against heat and haste in the interpretation and application of Scripture. No one had a right, during David's life or for some days after his death, to declare that prophecy Messianic. It might have been Davidic. But also what a mysterious thought is here as to the dormant, expectant, compulsory fulfilments of Scripture, which are still biding their time, waiting the hour and waiting the man. Have you thought of the impossibilities and the necessities of the Bible as they lurk within those binding boards and between those containing pages? How ought we to study the

details of Scripture, that we may not be taken by surprise, like the Israelites of our Lord's day, when the accomplishment bursts upon us; that we may be able then to say, Thus it was written—thus it behoved—this was necessary, and that was not possible.

The mistake we make is not in the patient studying, it is in the confident applying. We have no business to write prophecy into history. We are exceeding our powers when we say, In the year 2000, or in the year blank, such and such will be the chronicle of events—such and such, Scripture says, will be the fate of the Turk and the destiny of the Chinese—I know of the one by something said about the Euphrates, and I know of the other by something said about the land of Sinim. You know nothing at all, while you thus talk and thus judge. You are intruding into matters which the Father hath put in His own power. The real landmarks of Scripture are not names but principles: the real disclosures of Scripture have not years but millenniums for their date. A final fighting out of the great quarrel between good and evil—a final establishment of God's kingdom, which is righteousness, peace, and joy, on the ruins of every opposing power—a final victory of happiness over misery,

of faith over unbelief, of Christ over Satan—to this you are safe in applying the ‘must be,’ the ‘must needs be.’ But for the time and the instrumentality—for the lapse of contributing ages—for the number of intermediate agencies, the more direct and the more circuitous—you must sit at the feet of God, and learn. ‘In your patience ye shall win your souls.’ Only it is comforting, it is reassuring, it is fortifying, to know not only that ‘of Him and through Him and to Him are all things,’ but also that ‘the Lord God will do nothing,’ on a great scale and on a magnificent stage certainly, ‘but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets.’ In those holy pages are all things written, though the Inspirer alone has the key to them. They point to distant times and to agents who as yet perhaps are not—yet not only is the end sure, but the purpose is written down. In invisible ink, at present—save in so far as faith and hope and love need the present encouragement; but the day cometh which shall be revealed in fire—and that fire shall not only try the work of man, of what sort it is, but also bring to light the mysterious dealings, the secret counsels, of God, and thus at last justify all His ways to men.

XVII.

*GARDEN AND CITY—  
PARADISE AND HEAVEN.*





## XVII.

### *GARDEN AND CITY— PARADISE AND HEAVEN.*

#### REVELATION XXII. 14.

*(Authorized.)*

Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in thorow the gates into the citie.

*(Revised.)*

Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have <sup>1</sup>the right *to come* to the tree of life, and may enter in by the <sup>2</sup>gates into the city.

<sup>1</sup> Or, *the authority over.*

<sup>2</sup> Gr. *portals.*

THERE is a remarkable variation here between the Revised Version and the Authorized, and it has suggested our text this morning. 'Blessed are they that do His commandments,' is the reading of the Authorized Version. 'Blessed are they that wash their robes,' is the reading of the Revised.

The course of the last Revelation to the Churches has carried us across 'the waves of this troublesome world' into the haven where we would be. With the first paragraph of this chapter ends

the description of the glories and beauties of the new world. 'And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.' The Gospel seer, in the first ecstasy of his new enlightenment, is tempted to worship the interpreting Angel; but is bidden to keep all his worship for the one Object of adoration alike to Angels and men. A few particulars of precept and promise follow. The time is at hand. Soon it will be too late for men to cross over from one condition of life and soul to its opposite—soon will the righteous man and the sinner be finally stereotyped into the permanent, and the character will be sealed irreversibly. 'Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.' 'Blessed therefore are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life.'

Brethren, if this is the saying of Christ, we must bow to it. If it pleased Him to leave as His last word to the Churches this condemning sentence, it is not for us to remonstrate or to rebel. It might have been needful that we should walk in darkness and never see light. 'Blessed are they

that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life.' We cannot forget that there was an enquirer, when Christ was on earth, to whom He answered, 'If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments,' and went on to detail to him the commandments of the second Table, forbidding theft and murder, and bidding him to honour his father and mother. We had always read that remarkable dialogue as the record of a special and exceptional discipline. A moral young man came to Jesus asking what good thing he should do to earn heaven, and Jesus drew forth from him the self-complacency and self-conceit of his character by bidding him to do the very thing in which he fancied himself blameless. Then He set before him a sudden counsel of perfection, and the young man went away sorrowful.

Still, if it was the will of Christ to replace His Church, by the very latest of His revelations, on a footing of meritorious obedience—to say to us, in the words of the Authorized Version, 'Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life'—it must be so, and, though with downcast looks and tottering steps, we must set ourselves to follow. Yet we cannot check the rising thought, 'We trusted that it had

been He who should have redeemed man : His words were gracious, His call was to sinners, His death spoke of atonement, His message was a message of forgiveness : but if, after all, we are to do His commandments that so we may earn a right to the tree of life, we must either walk the weary round of a forlorn self-saving, or look onward still, onward ever, for the Saviour we need, and the salvation which shall be effectual.'

There are hearts in this congregation which will respond with gratitude to the voice of the Revised Version, 'Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to come to the tree of life.' One text, at least, comes purified out of that crucible—bright with Gospel gold, and restamped with Christ's own superscription.

Equally with the other reading and rendering, it is a call to virtue and holiness. But it differs widely in motive and in persuasion. They that wash their robes are men that have defiled them. They that by washing their robes acquire their right to the tree of life are men who have no rights, because no merits, of their own—all is of grace, as much the 'right' as the 'washing.'

The words themselves carry us back to the vision of the 7th chapter, where a great multitude

which no man can number stand before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands—and when the question is asked concerning them, ‘What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?’ it is answered in the very words of this revised text, ‘These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’ ‘Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple.’

How beautiful, how animating, in its suggestion—‘Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have right of access to the tree of life.’ It carries us back to one of the most Evangelical of Old Testament visions, where the high priest is seen standing before the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. The high priest, at the beginning of the vision, is clothed with filthy garments—garments of earth and fallen nature. And it is said to the ministering spirits before the throne, ‘Take away from him the filthy garments.’ And to him it is said, ‘Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.’ Forgiveness, and cleansing—the grace of justification, and the grace of sanctifi-

cation—are the two gifts typified in the figure before us. The robes were not always white—the robes are not made white by once washing. ‘Blessed are they that wash their robes’—there is no benediction upon the wearers of the self-white clothing—*they* are those who trust in themselves that they are righteous, and need no repentance. A whole Gospel is in the saying. It is not only, ‘Blessed are they that have washed’—there is a recognition of the daily, the hourly, the perpetual washing: for the Greek word is, ‘they that keep washing’—they who—to introduce a slightly different similitude of the Christian standing—having once washed the whole body in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, have need constantly to wash the feet, soiled afterwards, and again and again, by contact with the dust and the miry clay of this world. ‘Blessed are they that evermore wash their robes,’ by an ever-repeated application of the ‘blood of sprinkling’ alike to the accusing conscience and to the sin-stained life.

Brethren, it is the voice of Jesus Christ which we thus hear speaking, clear and full, in the very latest message to His Churches. No uncertain sound comes forth to us from the restored and rehabilitated text of Scripture. It is the ‘trumpet

talking' with us—bidding us to rise out of this vague and haphazard life of perpetual doubt or perpetual procrastination, into the clear light and into the true knowledge of a Saviour dying for sin and rising for justification—a Saviour who does not upbraid us with too frequent or too importunate an application to the throne of grace, but ever liveth to make intercession, and to minister, according to our need, of His renewing and sanctifying Spirit.

The Christian life has many features and many characteristics. This is one of them—it is a perpetual washing of the robes. No spot or stain must be suffered to remain upon them. It is a most dangerous thing to fall into the habit of letting any committed sin pass *sub silentio* (as it were) between the man and his soul. Scripture indeed counsels no morbid self-scrutiny. Harm may be done by it. A man may walk timidly and slavishly before God by reason of it. We are not taught that many express words, or perhaps any express words, need pass about particular wrong thoughts, acts, or words, in direct converse on the subject between God and the soul. But, if so, it must be because the intercourse is so thorough that it need not be microscopic. The man does not wash each separate spot and stain, because he

washes the whole robe, and them with it. One way or another, the tablets of memory and the tablets of conscience and the tablets of life must be sponged clean every evening—and in one only way, by what Scripture calls ‘the blood of the Lamb’—that is, the Atonement made once for all for all sin, applied in earnest faith to the individual man’s heart and soul in the sight of God.

Carelessness about washing the robes for pardon runs on into carelessness about washing the robes for purity. An idle letting alone of the clouded and soiled conscience naturally passes into an idle letting alone of the inconsistent or careless life. If we troubled ourselves more about clouds between God and the soul by reason of committed sin or omitted duty, we should be more anxious about duties and sins in the onward course of the life. We should not be willing to incur a second time and a thousandth time the pain and grief which attend the prayer after sinning. If we had really felt the misery of having to confess one single despising of the birthright, we should rise up from it with a less light heart—we should be more watchful against doing the same thing again, with the same misery to look forward to as the consequence.



‘Blessed are they that are ever washing their robes’—whose religion it is to be living that life of the consciously forgiven which is also the life of the constantly watchful—that so they may have right of access, here and hereafter, to the tree of life.

The allusion is clear to the history in Genesis of a Paradise forfeited. The punishment of the Fall is there expressed in allegory as an exclusion from access to the tree of life. It is expressed in that great parable as a matter of anxiety with God Himself, lest the fallen creature, who had eaten of the tree of knowledge, should eat also of the tree of life. A fallen immortal is a combination too dreadful. To live on for ever a life of sinning—we have seen and known many horrors, but we have neither heard of nor conceived this.

What other and further secrets may lie in that record, we know not. But this is evident—that, besides the forfeiture of an immortal earthly existence, the great Fall had in it a darkening of that higher and truer life which is intercourse with God Himself in happy affiance and conscious communion. We must not argue too positively from intimations evidently veiled in figure—but that ‘voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the

cool of the day,' from which Adam and his wife for the first time hid themselves when for the first time they heard it as sinners, must clearly indicate a nearness and joy of access to the Author and Giver of life—man's privilege in days of innocence, no longer man's privilege when once he had sinned.

But they that wash their robes—they who live the forgiven life, and the clean life, in Jesus Christ—shall have this right of access to the tree of life given back to them in its antitype. If 'life' is union with God, and the 'tree of life' is the symbol of that union, and 'access to the tree of life' is the enjoyment of that union, then the 'right of access to the tree of life' must be the privilege of exercising that union, and the declaration is, that they whose characteristic here below is a constant washing of the robe of the soul and of the robe of the life have the blessedness, in proportion as that is their description, of intimate converse with God Himself through Christ by the Spirit.

It is easy to see—every man's experience shows it—the connexion between the washing of the robes and the access to the tree of life. Let a man recall the day on which he let his

sins alone, in the way of notice, and in the way of sorrow, and in the way of confession, and in the way of prayer for pardon, and in the way of supplication for grace—he will recall also a day on which he was a stranger to God, as to all peaceful communing and as to all comforting hope. This explains, for all practical purposes, why it should be true also, as the net result of the life, that it is they who have habitually in this world washed their robes who shall have the right, in that world, of access to the tree of life.

There remains yet one clause of the text, and one remarkable feature of the saint's rest and glory—'and may enter in through the gates into the city.'

All are struck by this thought—Paradise Lost was a garden, Paradise Regained is a city. Whatever else there was in the one, of beauty or glory, it was a self-life. All was there, if not of luxury, if not of indolence, yet at least of enjoyment and of isolation. There were no sights or sounds of distress, to evoke the nobler feelings of pity and sympathy, or the nobler activities of helping and ministering. Even the spiritual life of Paradise, if we may not with reverence speak of it

as selfish, was yet a life self-concentrated and self-contained, redeemed only from an unlovely exclusiveness, on the one side by there being none to shut out, on the other side by its being lived in the light of a God of Love. Not until sin entered, and death by sin, was there either the family to evoke charity, or the Church to exercise communion.

Paradise Lost was symbolized by a garden, destitute of all the disciplinary influences of the life of contradicting wills and conflicting interests. God was there—but it was as the God of Nature and Providence, not as the God of compassion, the God of Revelation, or the God of grace.

Paradise Regained is a city—even though it has still its river and its foliage, its spacious expanse and its beautiful scenery. It is the great city, the holy city, with its wall great and high, its twelve gates and its strong foundations. Lustrous itself with uncreated glory, needing neither sun nor moon to lighten it, it is yet a luminary by reflexion, and the nations of them that are saved walk in the light of it.

Paradise is now not garden but city. This last book of the Bible, and one other book, the Epistle to the Hebrews, have the privilege of so

designating it. But the idea is in all the Epistles and in all the Gospels. Heaven is no place of luxurious repose, no state of delicious communing with a God who knows only the self-man and the spirit that is in him. Heaven is a society, a community, and a polity. Its life is two-sided: it is a life God-ward, and it is a life man-ward—it is a life of direct access, and it is a life of boundless love.

We know not what mystery of marvel untold may lurk in that saying, ‘The kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honour into it.’ Shall there be still—we ask, and we cannot answer—an earth external to this heaven, into which spirits made perfect shall be sent forth on more than Angelic ministries of comfort and benediction? Shall there still be a life more than international, because in it sympathy shall be quick and ardent between a creation still incarnate and a ‘first-fruits of that creation’ already risen and glorified?

It is enough for us at present to confine our attention to the world of glory as it is for its own inhabitants. For them, as amongst themselves, heaven is a city. St Paul used to speak of meeting there his own converts, Asiatic and European, and seemed to say that it would scarcely be heaven to

him if they shared it not with him. 'He that raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us—with you.' 'What is our glory or joy or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?' So large was his conception of the amplitude of the glory, and of its characteristic features of human sympathy as well as of Divine communion.

Thus it is that, without dwelling much upon it, Scripture leads us to associate the reunion of dead and living in a world out of which all idolatry and all selfishness will have been for ever cast out by the unveiled presence of that one Person whom to know is life, whom to serve is glory.

Into that city they who have here constantly and at last perfectly washed their robes shall find themselves entering by no narrow or secret postern, but, as it is here written, 'by the gates'—through those wide and splendid 'portals,' opening of their own accord to receive them, of which it is written, in an earlier part of the record, that at each one stands a ministering Angel; and again, that the gates 'shall not be shut at all by day'—and day only need be spoken of—'for there shall be no night there.' This 'entering by the

gates' is that which St Peter speaks of in simpler figure, 'For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.'

The alternative thought suggested is one which may not unsuitably close our meditation this morning. It presents to us the idea of one for whom the great portals of the celestial city do *not* open themselves—of one who, in St Peter's solemn phrase, 'scarcely is saved'—or, in St Paul's anxious warning, leaves all his 'work' to the burning, 'himself saved so as through fire.' Brethren, there are such cases. It is our best hope for many whose death-beds we weep over, that they may be amongst these. So feeble and flickering has been the lamp of grace, so tentative the hold upon the great verities of the Gospel, so faltering (in many definite ways) the testimony of the conduct itself for Christ, that the abundant entrance is utterly wanting—the scanty and furtive and precarious entrance is the one hope through grace. For one another, let us hope all things—let us commit into the hands of God, as into the hands of a merciful and faithful Creator, the most anxious and the least hopeful of the departing. But for ourselves let us rest in nothing

but the bright hope and the sure promise. To wash the robes, day by day, well and thoroughly, in the blood of Christ; to leave nothing upon the conscience, and nothing in the life, to be an anxiety in the hour of death for the dying one or for the surviving many; to know in whom we have believed, and to commit the departing soul into His hands as the strength of the heart and the portion for ever—be this our resolution, this our prayer, this in due time our experience, through the living grace of Him who for us died and was buried, for us rose and ascended, that we may have right of access to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.



XVIII.

*HOME RELATIONS.*



## XVIII.

### HOME RELATIONS.

#### EPHESIANS III. 14, 15.

*(Authorized.)*

For this cause I bow my knees  
vnto the Father of our Lord Iesus  
Christ,

Of whom the whole family in  
heauen and earth is named.

*(Revised.)*

For this cause I bow my knees  
unto the Father, from whom  
every <sup>1</sup>family in heaven and on  
earth is named.

<sup>1</sup> Gr. *fatherhood*.

THERE can be no doubt that the right rendering is, 'every family.' And there is a further point unavoidably lost, in the word 'family' itself. St Paul says, 'For this cause I bow my knees (in prayer) unto the Father, from whom every fatherhood, in heaven and upon earth, is named'—derives that name of 'fatherhood.' The force of the saying lies in the *πατήρ* and *πατριά*. Every human family is such in virtue of a Divine Father. Every little section of the great society, which is the sum total of rational, moral, and spiritual being, is combined and cemented into its separate unity by the fact that it has a Father in heaven,

the Spring and Source of all being, and the Designer and Founder of each single knot and group of being.

The text gives great dignity and even sanctity to this night's subject. It is a subject never unsuitable where a congregation of human beings, men or women, is gathered into one place. So much does home life lie at the root of all life—so primary an element is the home in all that makes, or is, the life—that the mention of it, with its duties, or, to use a wider term, its relations, must always be appropriate, must everywhere be suggestive, must, I think, almost always and almost everywhere be stirring and reproofing to the conscience of those who listen and (let me add) of him who speaks.

But if everywhere, how much more here, how much more this evening, where the hearers are young men—inmates still (for the most part) of homes where parents, still living, dwell, and, more yet than this, have their hearts full of a very recent parting, and would fain be told something, or reminded of something, by which they may still cherish and cultivate a relationship now for a while to be of faith not of sight.

It is impossible not to be struck by the sight of this congregation. This is, in a more than

common sense, a voluntary Service. I cannot but feel it as a sign of life in this great University, that such a Service should have been instituted by its elder, and accepted so cordially by its younger, members. May a blessing from on high not be wanting to us, while we resume these Services to-night after a long interval, and would fain give a profitable tone to their new start and to their year's course.

Our subject is the brief compound—'Home Relations.'

And one passing word may be given to the question, What is 'Home'? St Paul tells us that it is a society which has God for its founder; and we have only to add to this that it is a society of which each individual father is the human centre. The parental presence is the home. Place is no part of it. We may speak of the home of our childhood, or the home of our youth, and mean by this the particular house in which days full of delightful memories were spent, and from which to have been uprooted by circumstance adverse or prosperous was a trouble and a sorrow never to be compensated—but, after all, the home itself moves with the parents, and the essence of it is still, amidst all change, the parental presence.

Now the home, thus defined, may be of various, even of opposite, characters. There are good homes and bad homes—homes of beautiful example, tender affection, and entirely beneficent influence. There are homes of mere self-indulgence, teaching no better lesson than that of the utter unsatisfactoriness of a life lived to itself. There are homes of pitiable discord, where the best hope of the best of sons is that he may be the gentle and persuasive mediator, determined to veil what he cannot honour, and to do his difficult duty alike and equally towards two incongruous characters whose one chance of harmony lies in him. We have seen such instances—we have seen the painful task nobly accomplished, whatever the final issue in success or failure.

These last words show us that home does not cease to be home because its characteristics are not home-like. Home is the parental presence—and neither unworthiness nor ungodliness nor open evil can either abrogate its rights or destroy its responsibilities. 'Home' has its 'relations' still, even where pain and grief are the sum of them.

The question has suggested itself, whether Christianity, whether Christ Himself, makes much

of home duties—whether the new relationship, of redemption and grace, has not superseded, or thrown quite into the background, the old tie of the human sonship. It cannot be denied that many young converts have rushed to that conclusion. The new duty, of witnessing and testifying, has been made to justify and even to sanctify the uttermost disregard of parental requests, wishes, and feelings. Nor can it be denied that a few strong expressions fell from our Lord's own lips, which, standing alone, and taken literally, might seem almost to abolish the natural for the spiritual relationship. 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother...he cannot be my disciple.' Of course, a better instructed interpreter sees in such expressions nothing more than a strong utterance of the principle, that, in comparison with duty to Christ, every other relationship must stand aside. And we have no need to interpret for Him what He has so emphatically interpreted for Himself—in three ways, to mention no others to-night: (1) by His own example of filial duty—'He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them'—continuing, till the age of thirty years, the humble dweller in a village and cottage home,

without one assertion of Divine claim or mission as making Him independent of the commonest home relations: (2) by His keen and indignant reproof of those who would withhold from father or mother one single thing which might be for profit or comfort to them, on the plea that it was 'Corban,' that is to say, a consecrated offering: (3) thirdly, and, to my mind, far above all, by His taking the earthly relationship of father and son as the one sufficient type of the superhuman relationship of man to his God—always speaking of God Himself under that title, and making this the address of all the prayers of His people, 'When ye pray, say, Our Father, which art in heaven.' With such expressions of His mind and will, we need scarcely carry on the enquiry into the writings of His Apostles, or wait for their strong and repeated enunciation of the everlasting stringency of the fifth commandment of the Decalogue, 'Honour thy father and mother—which is the first commandment with promise.'

We cannot forget how the voice of Divine Inspiration has made the condition of our Home Relations the test of a standing or falling national virtue. The Old Testament closes, the New Testament opens, with that definition of the Elijah



mission, as the reprover and restorer of all things, 'He shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.' 'He shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.' The very substitution of the clause, 'and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just,' for the original of Malachi, 'and the hearts of the children to their fathers,' seems suggestive at least of the connexion between filial estrangement and a general ungodliness—between a heart undutiful and a heart irreverent—a son alienated from his father, and a man alienated from his God. 'He shall turn the hearts of the children to their fathers,' is, in other words, 'He shall turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.' It is remarkable, in this connexion, that we do not find any express mention, in the Baptist's ministry, of a special appeal to parents and children, such as he addressed to the soldiers, the publicans, the Pharisees, or the people at large. Parental and filial discord was not so much one single example, it was a general description

rather, of the dislocation and disorganization of society which he was sent to remonstrate with and to heal.

Most true and certain it is, that the state of the homes is the state of a population. If you would know what society is, you must examine the family. The terrible thing is, when you find in the lower classes of the national life an early abandonment of the home, or a stay within it on the footing of an absolute and avowed independence. In many of our great towns, the daughter, as well as the son, is a lodger: the contribution, which is her bounden duty, to the family resources takes the form of a rent for board and lodging, which, on the first word of rebuke or restraint, she can, with or without notice, simply carry elsewhere. The religion of the family, such as it is, is not a family religion: each member of the family goes his or her own way, on the day of rest, to Church or Chapel, to this or that Church, to this or that Chapel, in absolute disregard of the wish of the parent or of the companionship of brother or sister. The family life is a rope of sand, without recognition and without cohesion.

Is not that a true word, a Divine insight, which traces all the faults and all the sins and all the

crimes of that nation, to its root and source here? Is it not the estrangement of fathers from sons, and of children from parents, which makes the world, our world, the wilderness it is? Is it not at this point that the Elijah must begin his restoring, that the Elisha must throw in his healing salt, if the restoration is to be thorough, if the cure is to be vital?

These gross and vulgar forms of home dissension are of course not those of *our* social standing. If the same evil exists amongst us, it will manifest itself in a different way—under a veil and mask, probably, of many lingering civilities and kindlinesses. Nevertheless the principle of the same disorganization may be at work even here. We cannot with any confidence attempt the comparison, in this matter, of one age of the world, or one generation of our own country, with another. There were undutiful sons, we know, from the first days—undutiful sons in Canaan and the wilderness—undutiful sons in every country of heathendom and of Christendom—undutiful and unnatural sons, in high places and low, in the last century of our own England. It would be gross exaggeration to say that there are not thousands of homes, gentle and simple, in our own country

to-day, where the relationships of parents and sons are exercised in beautiful harmony, with all the reverence on the one side, with all the tenderness on the other side, with all the love on both, of which that most gracious, most Divine institution is capable.

And yet, is the restorer's office absolutely superfluous to-day? Is there no such want amongst us as the turning of hearts to each other, in the relation of sons and fathers? You will not say it—no, not even you, though I address here the most favoured class of all—in many respects, the most exemplary. We must not exchange compliments here—we must try to reach hearts, to touch consciences. We know, by ourselves, from our own observation, alas from our own experience, that it is quite possible to have great estrangements, of heart and feeling, quite decently and decorously glossed over. (1) There is a selfish neglect of the home, in presence or absence, quite possible, quite easy, without one disrespectful word spoken. (2) There is even a contemptuous treatment possible—as though the young knew better than the old, had a revelation, all their own, of the thing that is manly and the thing that is proper and the thing that is universal. (3) And there is

a slight, silly, trifling treatment possible—a general levity, of tone and manner, making all serious counsel, making all grave conversation, making all true sympathy, out of the question—silencing all that is deep or high, all that is really great and really heavenward, in the intercourse between a man and his father, between a man and his mother, between a man and his brother, between a man and his sister, and leaving behind it, after each sojourn, and after each visit, a sense of void and of vacuity, bitterly disappointing to the home-heart that was yearning for confidence, yearning for reality, yearning for help, to be received and to be given, in the anxious critical journey (as it is felt, on that side, to be) from birth to death, from earth to heaven.

The result of these things is, in various shapes and forms, that evil thing which the Elijah mission comes to repair—alienation or estrangement between the heart of the parent and the heart of the son.

(1) Often it is, as I have described it, a careless estrangement. There is no motive in it, no reason for it, no avowal, perhaps no consciousness, of it—it is what might easily have been avoided, it is what might possibly be removed,

were there but just the thing, which, alas, is the thing wanting, an earnest purpose, a conscientious resolve. Meanwhile, all is playing, trifling, jesting. Nothing is called by its own name. The very relationship itself has a nickname—for which we plead that it means nothing, when, unhappily, that is the very worst of pleas, making into an excuse the very purposelessness which is the crime.

(2) Now and then, not quite rarely, it is a religious estrangement. The son has taken up opinions, which are not those of the home, on subjects of sacred import. He may be right in so doing. That is, he may be convinced, in heart and soul, of the truth of something different from the system, of doctrine or ritual, in which he was brought up. He may have given much time, large reading, deep thought, earnest prayer, to the discovery of the thing which God has spoken. He cannot help the result—it is his life. Then arises the practical question—This new doctrine is not the doctrine of the home—the home dislikes, protests against, will have none of it. Unwise arguments, injudicious entreaties, overbearing commands, are heaped upon him. Much and sorely against his will, alienation is forced upon him. It

is not his doing—he tried all gentle methods, they were in vain. But how often is it otherwise! There was no modesty in the manner, there was no humility in the language, there was no reluctance (there ought to have been) to differ, there was no moderation in the carrying out of the new, there was no show of regret in the abandonment of the old. The alienation is a religious alienation—but it need not have been: he might have avoided it, without cowardice and without compromise.

(3) Far, far more often the estrangement is the direct opposite of this. It is not a religious, it is a sinful alienation. By some one of the thousand wiles or assaults of evil, the son has been led astray from the God of his father. He has that in his bosom which cannot dwell in the home—if it does, it must first disguise itself. A guilty secret is there, such as innocent sisters could not hear of and live. A deep sense of hollowness, a burning wound of shame, makes it torture to be as he is where he is. A distance wide as the poles asunder severs him from days when home could be home to him. The habit of dissimulation grows. At last he is a stranger amongst next friends. The heart of the son is alienated from the father—where is the Elijah that shall turn it back again?

We ought to be able to answer that question. There is a balm in Gilead, for all sorrows—may there but be the Physician, the Divine Physician, to apply it. But first we must say a word or two as to what home is—in God's intention, and in the experience of His children.

(1) Home is our haven. In early years, it is a place of safe-keeping. What should we have been without that safeguard? Have we ever stopped to commiserate and to feel for the homeless? Those poor children, baptized in tears, who never had a home—how must it be with them? No sweet memories—of gentle nurture, of kind smiles and loving words, of the presence of all good and the absence of all evil—can we wonder that they fell into bad ways and vile habits? What was there to warn them off from them? What was there to win them another way? What was there so much as to distinguish for them between good and evil? God's holy ordinance, above and before all services or sacraments, of a tender and loving home, this was wanting to them—and, with it, all that 'preventing with the blessings of goodness' of which a Psalmist tells, and of which we, the worst of us, have all had experience.

But that which home was to us in the infancy



and in the childhood, that it still is, or still might be, to us, whether as the permanent residence or in the occasional return.

Where is the young man who does not owe much, who might not owe much more, to his holidays from School, to his vacations from College? How much did we feel in our own past days for those Indian or Australian Public-School boys, who had no home to go to in the intervals of School-times. What a perceptible lack was there, for them, of the blessed influences of the holidays. Premature citizens of the world, they were made playthings of, they were made guests of, they were made men of—they were tolerated, or they were caressed, or they were flattered—they were not, and they could not be, in those intervals, recruited and repaired and restored by the holy influences of a home.

With us it is otherwise. When we return home, we shake off the surroundings and the encumbrances of a factitious existence, and go back into all the naturalness and all the reality of the rock from which we were hewn. 'For a few short weeks,' said a voice silent now for almost forty years, 'this fatal spell will now be taken off from you, and you will live and breathe in freedom.' O

the reparative and restorative influence, as it might be, of those 'few short weeks!' Repent of your neglect of them—use them hereafter, if God spares you, to the full.

(2) Home is our confessional. Yes, before there was altar or shrine, ministry or priesthood, home was. The father of the household was its priest. God modelled upon that exemplar all priesthood that was ever His institution. Priesthood itself replaced not the home—still less that Christian ministry which leaves all Christians priests. How many soever be the presbyters of the Church of England, still the confessional, as God ordained it, is the home. Thither carry your secrets—there unbosom, and there leave them. Absolution is of God only—'who can forgive sins but God alone?' I speak of the human instrumentality—and I say that for one man whose best confessor is the Clergyman, for a hundred and a thousand men the best, the alone safe, confessor is in his home.

Yes, in the home. Many a secret which there is danger, moral danger, spiritual danger, in divulging in a Vestry or Chancel, may be confided, with nothing but advantage, to a brother, to a father—best of all, to a mother. Fear not the not

being understood—fear not the being abhorred—fear not the being indelicate, or the doing harm. The purest of Christian matrons knows something of the evil that is in the world—she can understand you. The purest of Christian matrons is a mother too—fear not lest her love should spurn from her, for his sin, the son of her womb. A word, a half-word, will tell all that she need know: unspoken, unspeakable, will be the comfort, the relief, the emancipation, for you. Of all the terrors of a mother, concealment is the most terrible. Confidence given will be joy more than grief—even if it should tell of the most heinous sin that man is capable of. Then, if there be but the honest heart—and without it there would not be the confession—infinite will be the help in regaining the right way, from the knowledge that a mother sympathizes, a mother counsels, and a mother prays.

(3) Yet one word more—Home is our friend. Very delightful is other friendship—ask not of me any depreciation of it. ‘There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.’ The mere fact that I have chosen him partly proves and partly ensures the congeniality and the sympathy. But yet, I say it—home is the friend. It is the dear

ones of birth and nature who will go through the life with us. Friends may be severed, beyond the reach of voice or sign—friends may form their own new ties, or their own life-tie, and be partially lost to us. The home and its belongings change not. We go back to them, as to our own, after the longest separations, after the widest wanderings. Hold fast by your home. Even its relics and fragments are precious. Even upon the ‘broken pieces of that ship’ we can ‘escape safe to land.’ Nothing is like it. Cling to it. It is your life.

It has been the object of this plain common Sermon, to hold up to your thankful contemplation the privileges and responsibilities of your home relationships. I shrink not from very humble particulars. I press upon you the duty and the blessing of a constant correspondence by letter with your homes. The old-fashioned Sunday letter is a great institution alike of nature and grace. Give time to it. Keep nothing back. You give infinite pleasure. You clear and cleanse your life by it. You keep the door open by it between you and your haven, between you and your confessional, between you and your friend. Everything that Sunday ought to be harmonizes and sympathizes entirely with this use of it. It is

not instead of worshipping, nor instead of hearing Sermons, nor instead of happy converse with God and man—but it is a good sequel and corollary to all these. I make it a sample of your use of the home relationship as a whole.

I must add yet three concluding words.

(1) First, Remember the home relations of others besides yourself. Let the thought make you sympathetic. Towards those beneath you in station—servants and tradesmen—let it teach you consideration. Take pleasure in entering into their home feelings. Those, more especially, who have left homes of their own to serve you, how desirous should you be to help them in remembering their own—to rejoice in their home joys and to weep with their home sorrows. Still more, let the thought make you doubly watchful against drawing others into sin. Do not, in wantonness or in selfishness, involve another, beside or beneath you, in that miserable alienation from home which we have spoken of as the certain consequence of sinning. The poorest has a home, however homely—the woman which is a sinner had a home once : be not you instrumental in adding one lock or one bar to that home, if it be now shut behind her.

(2) Secondly, Beware of so treating your own

home in the present as that it shall be the bitterest memory to you in a day that shall be. If you knew what it is to be what the Psalmist speaks of as 'a man that mourneth for his mother,' you would dread above all things the having to feel, in that season of heaviness, that, by omission or commission of yours, you ever make that mother's heart to ache for you. While yet there is time, for most of you, think of that last end, and treasure not up unto yourselves sorrow in the cloudy and dark day.

(3) My last word of all is spoken to a few in this congregation, who, like us older men, have already passed through that saddest and sorest of experiences—the loss of one or of both their parents. Does that, think you, end the relationship? God forbid! It does but seal and crown and immortalize it. The fifth Commandment has still its echo for you—'Lord, have mercy upon us,' and not only so—for this might be but the remembrance of an irreparable past—but, in the view of an available future also, 'incline our hearts to keep this law.' Yes, we have still to honour the father and the mother departed. We have still to speak reverently and thankfully of them, and nothing ever that is not such. We have still to feel them near us, in

our going out and coming in. We have still to give thanks for them in the Prayer for the Church Militant. I do not say that we can pray for them—and yet I do feel that God will not cast out the prayer which asks not indeed for a reversal of their condition (God grant they need it not) but for His holy keeping, for His sweet presence with them, for His continued and continual advancement of them in all joy and in all knowledge. Nothing is less Christian than the relegation of the departed into an unapproachable land of shadows, whither no loving thought, no tender sympathy, no real and realized communion, can any more reach them. Let your ‘home relations’ take in the dead—it shall give sweetness to your prayers, reality to your hopes, and sanctity to your conduct towards the living. ‘Always to be praised, as well for the dead, as for them that are alive’—such is our description of God Himself in our commemoration of the world’s benefactors—and, for ourselves, no benefactors can be equal to those who have been dear and loving to us while they lived, and have guided us by their example towards that everlasting Home where they are now safe and at rest till the day of Christ’s coming.

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